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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 104

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No. 4

VEDIC PRAYERS

सुसमिद्धो न आ वह देवाँ अग्ने हविष्मते।
होतः पावक यक्षि च॥

—Rg Veda, 1.13.1

O Agni, your name is Susamiddha (one who glows brilliantly). For the sake of the sacrificer and for our own sake, O Purifier, please bring the gods here, and also worship them.

मधुमन्तं तनूनपाद्यज्ञं देवेषु नः कवे।
अद्या कृणुहि वीतये॥

—Rg Veda, 1.13.2

O Illumined One (Kavi), you are your own maker (*tanūnapāt*). (What can we mortals do?) Today, (on our behalf) please arrange for the gods to accept our oblations which are sweet, and bring joy unto them.

इळा सरस्वती मही तिस्रो देवीर्मयोभुवः।
बर्हिः सीदन्त्वस्निधः॥

—Rg Veda, 1.13.9

May the three goddesses who bring happiness, Ilā (the goddess of sacred speech), Sarasvatī (the goddess of learning) and Mahī (the great goddess, also called Bhārati), grace our sacrifice and be seated here in peace.

Harmony in Chaos

An attempt was made to study Vedic cosmology in these columns last month as well as in February. Concluding the subject, we shall see that there is harmony in this subject too, amongst various groups.

The Upanishads

Six seekers of knowledge approached sage Pippalāda. Of them, Kabandhi was the first to question: 'Revered Sir, wherefrom did all this come into being? (*kutha vā imāḥ prajāḥ prajāyante*).' The sage replied that the Creator (Prajāpati) desired an offspring. He performed austerity, and out of His austerity (*tapas*), a pair (*mithunam*) was created. That pair was matter and energy (*rayim ca prāṇam ca*). It was matter and energy that produced the entire cosmos. This is the *Praśna Upaniṣad* idea.¹ The sage Aṅgīrasa taught Śaunaka in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* that That which is not perceived, not grasped, and is eternal is the source of all creation. The Upanishad continues by saying that, just as a spider sends forth its thread and sucks it back again, just as vegetation sprouts out of the earth, just as hair grows from a living being—this creation comes out of the Imperishable.² The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* considers the supreme Reality to be the source of all, the Lord of all.³ The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* begins with this statement: 'The sages who teach about Brahman exclaim: What is the cause (of this creation)? Is it Brahman? Where were we born from?... (*kim kāraṇam brahma kutaḥ sma jātā*).' The second mantra rejects many hypotheses like time, innate tendency, necessity, chance, the five elements, the source, the Puruṣa, and also a combination of all these as being the

cause. Even the Atman (the individual soul) is not capable of creation, says this Upanishad. What then could be the source? The third great mantra declares that it is *devātma-śakti*.⁴ This, according to commentators, is the Power (or Will) of the Supreme, and is not the Prakṛti of the Sāṃkhya. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* declares that it is from the Atman that space, air, fire, water and earth come into being, in that order. Again, the same Upanishad says that the supreme Being desired to become many. He performed austerity and created all this. Having created all this, He entered into His own creation (*tat sṛṣṭvā tadevānu-prāviṣat*). In its third section, this Upanishad broaches cosmology again, and says that Brahman, as the substratum (*adhīsthānam*) is the cause of this universe.⁵

We now pass on to the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, which is almost wholly devoted to cosmogony. The first mantra declares that, initially there was only the Self and nothing else. Then, It (or He) thought, 'Let me create worlds now.' Thus, the later mantras elucidate how He created the worlds, water, light and death. Later on, from waters (*adbhyaḥ*) He brought forth the human being and gave him a shape. After this, using the waters, He created food.⁶

The greatest and perhaps the most mystical of all the Upanishads, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, speaks about creation in this mystical vein: In the beginning, there was nothing whatsoever. It was all covered by Death (or, Hiranyagarbha, the primal, subtle form). He produced the mind, and thought that He must have a form (or a world of conscious and uncon-

1. *Praśa Upaniṣad*, 1.3.

2. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.1.6-8.

3. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 1.6.

4. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 1.1-3.

5. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1; 2.6.1; and 3.1.1.

6. *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, 1.1.2; 2.2.

form (or a world of conscious and unconscious objects, according to Rāmānuja). While Hiraṇyagarbha worshipped (*arcā*), water (*kam*) was created. Hiraṇyagarbha called this water fire (*arka*) because it was produced while He performed worship. Next, the froth that settled on the waters hardened and that became the cosmic egg. The Virāj (the gross form of Brahman) came into existence from out of the thought of Hiraṇyagarbha, who had desired that He must have a second form. Virāj was nourished inside the cosmic egg. After a year, when Virāj came out, Hiraṇyagarbha (also called Death), tried to swallow Him. The babe cried out, '*bhāṇ*', and this was the beginning of speech. Slowly, from speech came forth the Vedas and thus were all beings created.⁷ The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says that Prajāpati brooded over the three worlds, and from being thus brooded over, issued forth the Veda. Again, the same Upanishad says that Śvetaketu was taught by his father Udālaka that in the beginning there was Being alone. It was one only, without a second. Udālaka said that there was another opinion which said that initially, there was non-Being alone from which Being came into existence. Rejecting the second view, the sage said that the Being willed to become many. Thus, it created fire. Fire willed to become many and water was created. In its turn, water willed to be many and food was created.⁸

The Vedānta

The *Brahma Sūtras* come next. In the second sūtra, the 'definition' of Brahman is given as being One who is the originator (preserver and destroyer) of the universe. This famous sūtra is, *Janmādyasya yataḥ*. The *Bhagavadgītā* declares (15.1) that the source is above and the creation is below; by 'above' and 'below' are meant the supreme Reality and the creation. In the 9th chapter (7,8) He declares that He creates everything with the help of Prakṛti.

The three schools of Vedānta, Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita, need to be exam-

ined now. As we know, they base their fundamentals on the three scriptures, Upanishads, *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, but each have their own interpretation of them. Śaṅkara, who never accepts this universe as real (giving it the name *vyāvahārika sattā*), says in commenting on the above sūtra that the object of this sūtra is not to establish Brahman through inference but to discuss scriptural passages (*tasmāt janmādi sūtrāṇāṁ na anumāna upanyāsārtham ... vedānta vākya pradarśanārtham*). Criticizing the Sāṅkhyans, Śaṅkara says in his commentary to the fifth sūtra: 'If the Vedic sentences could assert that Brahman is the cause of the universe as the Sāṅkhyans say (see next page), then Prakṛti also could be the creator; we can interpret it that way also (*yāni vedānta-vākyaṇi sarvajñasya sarvaśakteḥ brahmaṇaḥ jagatkāraṇatvaṁ darśayanti iti uvāca, tāni pradhāna-kāraṇa-pakṣe'pi yojayitum śakyate*).' The same Śaṅkara, however, begins his Introduction to the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* with this quotation: 'From whom the universe was created, and into whom it dissolves, and owing to whom it is protected, I salute that supreme Being.' Again, in his Introduction to the *Gītā-bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara quotes a verse from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* about creation, and begins with these words: 'The Lord, having created this world.... (*sa bhagavān sṛṣṭvedam jagat...*)' One may also mention an authentic work on cosmogony by Śaṅkara, which has been interpreted by Sureśvara: it is *Pañcīkaraṇam*. What is more surprising is Śaṅkara's adoration of the Divine Mother by saying that a little dust of Her lotus feet was collected by Brahmā to create the universe.⁹ Rāmānuja is clear: for him, the universe is the transformation of Brahman. This theory is called the *brahma-pariṇāma-vāda*, Brahman being both efficient and material cause of the universe. Commenting on the verse of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* which we discussed above, Rāmānuja says that by the term 'That' in the verse, Parabrahman is meant. Madhva, the dualist, says about the same

7. *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.1-5.

8. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 2.23.1; 6.2.1-4.

9. Śaṅkara, *Soundarya Laharī*, 2.

word that it connotes Viṣṇu. Madhva says that creation is a process of dependent acquisitions of new characters, names and forms by finite entities (*parādhīna viśeṣāpti*).

The Sāṃkhya Cosmology

The Sāṃkhya is perhaps the oldest philosophical system in the world. Though the earlier Sāṃkhya of Kapila accepted Īśvara (hence called *śeṣvara sāṃkhya*), the later Sāṃkhya school, mainly proposed by Īśvarakṛṣṇa (his name is significant!) is godless (*nirīśvara*). The Sāṃkhyas are dualists: they accept Puruṣa and Prakṛti as separate entities. The Puruṣa is a mere witness and in His presence Prakṛti (or, *Pradhāna*) creates the universe. Prakṛti is nothing but a combination of the three qualities (*guṇas*), *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.¹⁰ It is on account of vibrations, permutations and combinations produced in these qualities that creation process begins. The process of Sāṃkhyan creation may be stated in brief as follows: Prakṛti gives rise to *mahat* (the 'whole' or the ideal state). *Mahat* is the subtlest form of creation, where there is no individuality. Slowly, this subtlest form becomes gross, or less subtle, and thus it gives rise to individuality or 'I' consciousness (*ahaṃkāra*). From individuality comes forth the finer elements (*tanmātras*). These finer elements combine and react to form the mind and the sense organs, and later still, the organs of action and the five gross elements. Swami Vivekananda appreciates Sāṃkhyan cosmology in his lectures. He praises Kapila thus: 'His analysis, so far as it goes, is simply marvellous. He is the father of Indian thinkers; Buddhism and other systems are the outcome of his thought.'¹¹ Now, where does this creation come from? Does it come from nowhere? This is where Sāṃkhyas prove their scientific method of thinking; they say that

the effect is always present in the cause (*kāraṇa kāryam sat*) and hence their theory is called *satkāryavāda*. What was involved, evolved in time, and what has evolved will be involved in time. The Yoga school follows the Sāṃkhyas and accepts *satkāryavāda*.¹²

The Other Schools

The Buddhists worry little about creation. 'Buddha did not feel called upon to solve the problem of external reality,' says Radhakrishnan in his *Indian Philosophy* (Vol. 1, p. 382). They say, 'What have rain and shine to do with the soul? (*varṣātapābhyām kiṃ vyomnavah*)'¹³ The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory is based on atoms: the fundamental unit is the *paramāṇu*. This fundamental unit combines with another to form a dyad (*dvyaṇuka*) and three such dyads form a triad (*tryaṇuka*). These triads combine in varying numbers to form composites—the gross forms. This school holds that origination takes place by negating its previous non-existence (*asatkāryavāda*).

The Pañcarātras are considered ancient; according to them, creation is of two types: pure (*śuddha*), which is the subtlest manifestation alone, and gross (*prākṛta*). Though Brahman has nothing to do with creation, it is His *śakti*, Lakṣmī, that engages in all activity. In the *Lakṣmī Tantra* She says that She is the creative aspect of the Lord (*jagat-prakṛti bhāvo me yaḥ sa śaktiritīryate*).

The *Bhāgavata* speaks of creation in three places in its second and third cantos (*skandhas*). Nārada asks Brahmā about what brings out the universe, and himself answers that the universe came into existence as Brahmā's thought (*viśvaṃ vijñānāvasitam tava*), also adds that He creates the universe by His own inherent power like the spider. Brahmā replies Nārada that there is a power higher than Him

10. Cf. the theory of quarks.

11. Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 2, p. 440. [Hereafter, *Complete Works*.]

12. See Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga Sūtras*, 1.32, 3.13, etc.

13. Mādhava, *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha* (Pune: Anandashrama, 1906), p. 8. [Hereafter, Mādhava.]

and that is the supreme Being. Brahmā's work is only to reveal the already existent world like the sun revealing the earth (*yena svarociṣā viśvaṁ rocitaṁ rocayāmyaham*). Brahmā explains that the supreme Being, though absolutely free, assumes the three qualities (*guṇas*) owing to His inscrutable will. Taking up time (*kāla*), efficacy (*karma*), innate tendency (*svabhāva*), etc, the supreme Being desires to express the universe. Time becomes capable of disturbing the equilibrium of the qualities; the innate tendency evolves into categories and karma gives rise to *mahat*. The rest is Sāṁkhyan creation. The categories thus formed remain in a cosmic egg on the causal waters (*tadaṇḍam-udakeśayam*). The supreme Being enlivens it by entering it as the *jīva*. From within, the shell is broken and out comes He, as countless beings. In the third canto, the reverse of creation is described. The supreme Being is lost in divine slumber, totally indrawn, when the universe plunges into the causal waters in total chaos. Slowly, regaining external consciousness, the Supreme stimulates His powers of time etc into action. The active efficacy bursts forth like a lotus bud from out of His navel. Brahmā finds Himself inside this lotus. Slowly, secondary creation called *visarga* ensues.¹⁴

To the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (1.18), the supreme Being has projected this universe by His power (*māyā*). He dwells within it as the innermost power (*svamāyayā kṛtsnamidaṁ hi sṛṣṭvā nabhavad-antarbahirāsthito yaḥ*). According to the Nākulīśa Pāsupatas, the Lord is contentment itself (*paryāptakāma*). There is no need for Him to act. However, inconceivable is His will that He creates everything. He is the cause of all causes (*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*).¹⁵ The Śaiva school holds that it is the *māyā* of the Lord that gives out everything anew during creation, and sucks in everything during dissolution.¹⁶

Bengal Vaiṣṇavism considers Brahman as the ultimate Reality, no doubt. But He has

two attributes, majesty (*aiśvarya*) and sweetness (*mādhurya*). He manifests Himself differently as Brahman, Paramātman and Bhagavat. Paramātman is the creator as well as the material cause of the universe. Brahman is His glory. Paramātman exercises His will when He desires to be many. Though this school adapts the Sāṁkhyan theory, it does not give independent status to Puruṣa and Prakṛti: both are dependent on Bhagavat.

The next is the great theory called the *sphoṭa* theory of language. Bhartrhari is the father of this theory. 'Speech is verily Brahman (*vāg vai brahman*)'¹⁷ is the foundation of this theory. 'Sphoṭa' is derived from the root *sphuṭ*, 'to burst forth'. How do we use language? The word is in us as unity or sphoṭa. When we utter it, a sequence of sounds is produced. The listener first hears the sequence of sounds, and later, perceives this utterance as unity. Thus, sound is the external manifestation of the internal unity called sphoṭa. The universe is nothing but name and form. We conceive of a form only from its name. This sound or sphoṭa is the source of all creation (*sarvaṁ śabdena bhāṣate*).¹⁸ Sphoṭa is identified with *praṇava* or 'Om'.

Thoughts from Outside India

The Greek philosophers were pioneers in philosophical thinking. We shall very briefly run through them. The first Ionic thinker was Thales, who initiated cosmological thinking on a scientific basis. According to Thales, the source of creation is water, and it is the only physical source of all creation. He says that it will all become water in the end. To his disciple Anaximander, there is no physical cause for creation but a formless entity called *apeiron* (the universe developing from the Infinite by rotation). To Anaximenes, air is the source of creation—its condensation causes creation. Heraclitus uses the word Logos for the first time. To him, the universe existed through all eternity. He is a

16. Ibid., p. 73.

17. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.1.2.

18. *Vākyadīpa*, 1.115.

14. *Bhāgavata*, 2.5, and 3.10.

15. *Mādhava*, p.65.

mystical thinker and, like the Buddhists, believes that everything is undergoing constant change. The universe follows a set rule and that is Logos to him. When static matter becomes dynamic, it is called becoming. Anaxagoras did not believe in a single fundamental unit of creation, but said that *nous* (mind) is the source of creation. There was an infinite mass, which slowly became organized as the universe. For Plato, the universe is itself an appearance. It is the combined formation of the universal reals and the formless, qualityless matter. Plato says that the stamp of universal reals is put on matter by God, and this results in the world-soul. This is further divided into the outer and the inner. The inner circle is what forms planets, while the outer becomes stars. The 'unmoved mover' of Aristotle, God, is the efficient, ultimate and real cause of everything.

We now move on to the Jewish tradition. We quote from the *Genesis* of the Old Testament: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light: and there was light' (1.1). The Jewish tradition has yet another version of creation. The oldest Hebrew book, *Yetsirah*, speaks about the 22 Hebrew alphabets: 'Twenty-two letters: He drew them, hewed them, combined them, weighed them, interchanged them, and through them produced the whole creation and everything that was destined to come into being.'¹⁹ Here we see the Sphoṭa theory restated in different words.

The Christian tradition (*New Testament*) accepts Jewish mythology. Apart from the *Genesis* idea, there are two other very important accounts of creation. The Epistle of St. Paul to Colossians (1.15,16) says that Christ 'is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn

of every creature. For by him were all things created....' Yet another vital version is St. John's version (1.1): 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him....'

St. Augustine says that God created the world out of nothing at a particular time. For Thomas Aquinas, the existence of God is proved because of the argument of the necessity of the efficient cause of the universe. The French philosopher, Descartes, says that the world and God are 'demonstrable certainties'. Like Rāmānuja, Spinoza says that God is both the efficient and material cause of the universe. For Leibnitz, this world is the 'best of all possible worlds' created by God.

The Koran, in Sura 16, says that God 'hath created the Heavens and the earth to set forth His truth....'²⁰

The Scientific Theories

Science had several minor theories of creation, and its investigators had varying experiences owing to their conclusions. The bubble theory, first propounded by Starobinskii of Russia, says that if one forms bubbles, there will be the likelihood of forming more than one bubble. 'And these bubbles are likely to collide. And that will give rise to an inhomogeneous universe.'²¹ There are other theories like the inflationary model, the chaotic inflationary model and so on—all recent ones, slowly getting obsolete. The famous theory, interest in which was evinced even by the papal authority, is the big bang theory. What is big bang? In 1929, Edwin Hubble observed that galaxies are moving farther and farther away from each other, showing that the universe is expanding. Hubble's idea showed that 'there

19. *Yetsirah*, 2.2. Quoted in J. Abelson, *Jewish Mysticism*.

20. Rev. J. M. Rodwell, tr., *The Koran* (London: Everyman's Library, 1933).

21. John Boslough, *Stephen Hawking's Universe* (New York: Avon Books, 1985). [Hereafter, John Boslough.]

was time called the big bang when the universe was infinitesimally small and infinitely dense ... time had a beginning at the big bang.²² Now, the big bang theory too is somewhat unable to answer all the questions. 'The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous,' says Hawking.²³ The scientific world is contemplating a unified theory called quantum gravity, which brings the subatomic world and the gross physical world together, and this one theory, scientists hope, will answer the riddle of the universe. But then, with all the support from the likes of String Theory, etc, the uncertainty principle poses a big threat to all developments. Therefore, three wonderful propositions are placed as the solution of the whole problem by Stephen Hawking: '(1) There is a complete unified theory, which we will someday discover..., (2) There is no ultimate theory of the universe, just an infinite sequence of theories that describe the universe more and more accurately, (3) There is no theory of the universe.'²⁴ Whether it will all lean towards the last point is to be seen.

Conclusion

An array of creation theories, starting from the Vedas up to the present ones were discussed. We had to leave out many for want of space. What is the truth about creation? Which theory is right? Almost all the possibilities that we studied from the *Chāndogya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Aitareya Upaniṣads*, the *Bhāgavatam*, some of the Greek, Jewish and Christian theories—all affirm that there is a pattern in religious thinking; that thought preceded creation, that sound preceded creation. We shall quote Swami Vivekananda:

In the beginning was the Word etc. The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the universal Soul in the living Prakriti—the objective universe.... This covering of one (soul) by the other (Nature) is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it; they are one, and the same and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore in the beginning was the Word etc. This dual aspect of the universal soul is eternal.²⁵

Swamiji continues in his *Bhakti Yoga*:

The whole of this universe has...both name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) as its conditions of manifestation.... If it be true that nature is built throughout on the same plan, this kind of conditioning by name and form must also be the plan of the building of the whole of the cosmos.²⁶

The religious need not feel inferior. Scriptural theories are not mere stories. 'I think there are clearly religious implications whenever you start to discuss the origin of the universe.... But I think most scientists shy away from the religious side of it,' confides Hawking.²⁷ Science is still groping to catch the truth with its instruments. Perhaps science also should accept name (*nāma*) along with form (*rūpa*) that it is so inquisitive about, for its study. But, when science already speaks of uncertainty, consciousness and so on, one fears that it may slowly become philosophy itself in the end. And philosophy is the answer to all doubting. For, philosophy leads to Truth. □

22. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, (London: Bantam Press, 1988), p. 8. [Hereafter, *Brief History*.]

23. John Boslough, p. 109.

24. *Brief History*, p. 166.

25. Eastern and Western Disciples, *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), Vol. 1, p. 250.

26. *Complete Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 56-57.

27. John Boslough, p. 109.

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

A Crow's Devotion

One day, in the forest, Rama and Lakshmana stopped by a clear stream to rest. There they saw a crow, apparently parched with thirst; yet each time it would go down to the water, it would turn again and come back without drinking. 'What a foolish crow this must be,' said Lakshmana, 'to be suffering from thirst here on the bank of a stream of cool water and not to drink a single drop.' 'Do not judge so hastily, my brother,' Rama replied. 'This crow is a great devotee of God who is constantly repeating His name. Whenever he goes down to the water to drink, he remembers that in order to drink he must cease to repeat the name of the Lord and he cannot bear to do that, so he goes back without drinking.'

Medical Wonders

Garrison wrote in his *History of Medicine*: 'The ancient Hindus performed almost every major operation except ligation of the arteries.' A hundred years before Harvey discovered the system of blood circulation, Bhāva Miśra wrote a huge volume on human physiology, anatomy and medicine. In it, he described in detail how blood circulates in the body.

Textiles in Ancient Bengal

Arabs were fond of Indian aloe-wood and cotton fabrics. During the Pālas of Bengal, a particular variety of fabric used to be manufactured and exported, which was so fine that it could be passed through a signet ring!

Mathematics

The use of zero, the first nine numerals, and the decimal notation were among the great contributions of India to the world of mathematics. History books quote one Severus Sebokht, a Syrian scholar of the 7th century: 'I wish only to say that the computing [by Indians] is done by means of nine signs. Those who believe, because they speak Greek, that they have reached the limits of science, should know these things; they would be convinced that there are also others who know something.'

Creation of Khalsa: Journey from Sikh to Singh

JASBIR KAUR AHUJA

On the 30th last, the people of Punjab celebrated the three hundredth anniversary of the creation of Khalsa. To mark this grand occasion, we invited this article, which gives the history and significance of Khalsa.

I will firmly control
The wild horse of blind fate;
Holding its reins in my hands,
I will overcome all dangers and troubles,
I will make it run my own way,
Against all odds and obstructions....
Come, come, come all, follow me.
The guru gives you the call;
From the depth of my inspired soul I say,
Awake, my whole country, awake, arise.

—Rabindranath Tagore
on Guru Gobind Singh¹

It was the first day of the month of *Vaisākh*, 30 March 1699. About eight hundred million Sikhs from areas ranging from Dhaka to Kabul had gathered at the behest of Sri Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib. The guru entered the assembly with a naked sword in hand and said, 'I need a head: who is willing to dedicate his life for the sake of the faith?' These words created awe and silence in the assembly. There was suspense all around. Guru Gobind Singh repeated his demand thrice. Then, with folded hands arose Daya Ram from Lahore and said: 'My Lord, I am willing to sacrifice my life at your holy feet.' The guru took him inside the tent; there was a dreadful shriek as if the guru beheaded him. Now, the guru came out with the sword dripping with blood and once again made the same demand. This happened five times and five devotees dedicated their heads. Each time, the guru came out with blood-soaked

sword. The other four who sacrificed themselves were: Dharam Das from Delhi, Himmat Rai, a cook, Mohkam Chand, a washerman, and Sahib Chand, a barber.

After this, when the guru came out of the tent, it was a different sight altogether: the dedicated disciples, whom people thought were beheaded, came out wearing the same type of attire of blue colour as that of Guru Gobind Singh. It was a unique phenomenon to witness. And the guru introduced them again to the huge assembly, saying, 'They are my five beloved ones: the pure, the Khalsa.' After this introduction, they were baptised with *Khande di Pahul*,² meaning, nectar prepared with a double-edged sword. Five hymns, namely, Japuji, Jaap Sahib, Chaupai, Anand Sahib and Swaiya were recited. The wife of Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Sahib Dewan, put sugar candy into the bowl so as to make the contents sweet. Mataji wanted the Khalsa to be sweet as well as brave. In addition to this, the guru gave the five the likeness of his own personality having beard, long hair, and turban on. All of them were administered baptismal water (*amṛta*) from the same bowl. This meant eradicating the distinction between high and low, rich and poor, and caste and creed. Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed that henceforward, the epithet *Singh* (lion) would be used as their surnames (last names). The baptised ones became members of a common brotherhood. In a similar way, the women and girls were given the common

1. Translated from the original by Trilochan Singh.

2. *Khanda* indicates the balance between mundane and spiritual lives.

epithet *Kaur* (lioness). The baptised ones were renamed as Bhai (brother) Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Himmat Singh, Bhai Mohkam Singh and Bhai Sahib Singh. They all became brothers. Their parents were Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Kaur (the wife of Guru Gobind Singh). The place of their rebirth was to become Gurdwara Sri Kesgarh Sahib in Anandpur Sahib.

After this unique ceremony, the guru requested his five beloved ones to baptize him too in the same manner as he did them. After baptism, he was renamed, and became Gobind Singh [from his former name Gobinda Rai]. Thus Gobind Singh himself became the disciple as well as the guru because, he had invested all his powers in the collective leadership of his beloved Khalsa—the five beloved ones (*Pañj Piāre*). It is therefore said that there is no other example of a guru becoming the disciple in the history of the world.

Guru Gobind Singh said in praise of the Khalsa:

*Khalsā mero rūp hai khās,
khalse main haun karūn niwas,
Khalsā merī jān kī jān,
khalsā mero prāṇ ko prāṇ.*³

A Sikh who does not live according to the spiritual tenets of Guru Gobind Singh cannot and should not be called a Khalsa. The guru made it clear that one who lived according to his ethical code was dearer to him than one who outwardly professed himself to be his disciple. There was a brahmin disciple who objected to the guru's attempt to raise low caste people to a level higher than even that of the brahmin caste. To this, the guru said:

*It is because of their love and faith
That all the battles I have won;
And distributed bounties free.
It is due to their support*

*That all my difficulties have vanished;
And my coffers are full again.
It is because of their kindness
That I have acquired knowledge and wisdom;
And my enemies have been vanquished.
It is through their grace
That I have attained glory;
Otherwise millions like me are there on this
earth....*⁴

Guru Gobind Singh said this 150 years before Marx was born, and 60 years before Rousseau or Voltaire.

Gobind Singh created the Khalsa in his own image and raised its collective leadership to a unique pedestal of democracy. When he said, 'I am born for them, to live among them,' it was the psychological and spiritual strength of the guru that was flowing through the baptised ones.

Thereafter, about 20,000 people were baptised. The number rose to 80,000 soon. With this spiritual and psychological strength, the guru gave the people a form and a uniform also. He made it imperative for the Singhs to use the five *ka-kārs*, that is, five symbols beginning with the sound *ka*. This was to make their appearance distinctive at the physical level as well. This form and uniform would always remind them of belonging to the community of lions. And, at the spiritual level, the recitation of the five hymns mentioned above in the morning would give them the inner strength to face the hazards of daily social and political sufferings they had to undergo.

It was imperative to keep these five *kakārs*, which were *karhā* (steel bracelet on the right wrist), *kachhā* (shorts), *kirpān* (sword), *kanghā* (a small comb) and *keś* (uncut hair). These five are reminders of the moral values in practical life for this martial and self-sacrificing race. *Kirpān* needs some clarification: it is not to be used as a sword or a butcher's knife. It is *kṛpā* + *āṇ*, which means kindness

3. 'The Khalsa is my own form and I live in Khalsa. Khalsa is the very life of my life and the very soul of my soul.'

4. *Granth Sahib*, Daśam Granth, 'Khalsā Mahimā', stanza 2.

and self-respect. It is the bestower of kindness, and is a harbinger of self-respect to the suppressed and needy—it is destructive of evil thereby. As Guru Gobind Singh has said, 'When all the remedies fail, it is fair to take the sword in hand.'⁵

It was thus that a martial race of saint-soldiers was created to help, protect and shield the needy and suffering from the hands of contemporary tyrant rulers. Here and there, in Indian history, we do find examples of bravery—of Rajputs like Maharana Pratap, or of Marathas like Shivaji. But there was no organized command to help the common masses as this one. It was therefore that a community was organized to sacrifice their all for the honour and respect of the country and countrymen.

The former President of India, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, has praised Guru Gobind Singh with these words:

Guru Gobind Singh created heroes out of dross and earth clods. Truly, he turned sparrows into hawks, lambs into lions, lumps of clay into heroes. For 1000 years after the death of Jaipal, India had lain prostrate. The raiders and invaders descended on India and took away the people, to be sold as slaves. People watched and had not the courage to strike a blow in defence of their weeping, wailing, sobbing, groaning mothers, sisters and daughters.... Guru Gobind Singh raised the Khalsa to defy religious intolerance, religious persecution and political inequality. It was a miracle that heroes appeared out of straws and common clay.... Their martyrdom did not go in vain. On their ashes, on their blood and bones, was laid the foundation of the Sikh empire which was secular in character and which blocked the Khyber Pass. India was spared the anguish which invaders had

repeatedly inflicted on India for about 1000 years. How very painful that many delightful people in the Punjab (India) should forget this miracle of Guru Gobind Singh.... India is at long last free. This freedom is the crown and climax and logical corollary to the Sikh Guru's and Khalsa's terrific sacrifices and heroic exploits.'⁶

Bulle Shah, a Punjabi Sufi poet, says in praise of Guru Gobind Singh, 'Had Guru Gobind Singh not been there, all would have been converted to Islam.' Guru Gobind Singh had to fight fourteen battles but did not occupy an inch of others' territory, or made prisoners of war. His main purpose in life was to uphold the status of saints and uproot the evil-doers. He himself has said in his autobiography, *Bachitar Nāṭak*, that the creation of the warrior class was the need of the time and the mission of his life, allotted to him by God Himself. According to his faith, 'The (Hindu) temple and the (Muslim) mosque are the same, the puja and the namaz are the same.'

Naming all people from Manchuria to Rome, Gobind Singh points out that all worship the same God and the differences in their forms of worship are mainly due to their different cultural environments. Wherever one sees, He pervades as supreme Love.

It is now pretty clear that the sikhs as a class, who came into being from Guru Nanak, the first guru, were transformed into saint-soldiers by Guru Gobind Singh owing to the need of the times. Swami Ranganathanandaji writes:

Guru Nanak and his movement sought to weld Hindus and Muslims into a powerful nation dedicated to the realization of the universal spiritual and human values transcending the prevailing communalism of sects and creeds and castes. This movement soon gathered strength, and equally soon, faced fierce opposition from

5. Jasbir Kaur Ahuja, *Zafarnama Guru Gobind Singh* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1996), p. 5, couplet 22.

6. Cf. extract from a letter in *Spokesman*, Vaishakhi Number, 1956.

the contemporary Muslim communalism and the Mogul political state. The tragedy which began with Guru Arjan, the fifth guru of the Sikhs, continued and reached its highest intensity during the period of the tenth guru, Gobind Singh, whose struggles, sacrifices, and successes make him shine as the greatest tragic hero of later Indian history. His character, dedication, intellect, courage, and above all, compassion, mark him out as a born leader and saviour. In his life as well as in death he has been a beacon of light and hope to millions of his countrymen.⁷

Swami Vivekananda was a great admirer of the Sikh gurus. Swamiji had longed to pay a visit to the Punjab. When he set out from Calcutta on 5 May 1897, with a plan of a lecture tour in northern India, his chief objective was to visit the Punjab. It is a fact of history that Punjabis were a brave people from the time of Alexander the Great, when Porus spurned the overtures of the alien invader and sent him word that he could meet him only in the battlefield. This continued down to comparatively recent times when the Sikhs challenged the might of the British Empire and went down after the hard-fought battle of Gujarat (a town near the Chenab) in 1849. They have shown their valour in hundreds of battles. They had been, as Swamiji said, the first to bare their chests to the onslaughts of a host of invaders from Persians down to Mongols. Swami Vivekananda always admired the strength and valour of this race and as soon as he entered the Punjab, 'great was his excitement, great was his admiration, especially for the Sikhs, and correspondingly, the latter also admired him,' writes Nivedita.⁸

Swamiji reached Punjab with his heart full not only of admiration for its brave people, but also with reverence for the land. He stayed there from 5 to 15 November 1897. In

his lecture at Lahore (in undivided Punjab) on 'The Common Basis of Hinduism', Swamiji eulogised the greatness of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and said, 'This is the land which, after all its sufferings has not yet entirely lost its glory and its strength. Here it was that in later times, the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the world.... Then and then alone you are a Hindu when you will be ready to bear everything for them (countrymen), like the great example of your great Guru Gobind Singh.'⁹ During his stay in Punjab, Swamiji witnessed the Amrit Sanchar ceremony at Lahore and was so fascinated with the name of 'Wahe Guru' that thenceforward, in his letters to Indian as well as Western disciples, he used and encouraged the slogan 'Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh'. To quote a few lines from a letter written to Nivedita from San Francisco on 26 May 1900, 'Don't despond in the least. Shri Wah Guru! Shri Wah Guru! You come of the blood of a Kshatriya. Our yellow garb is the robe of death on the field of battle. Death for the cause is our goal, not success. Shri Wah Guru—Shri Wah Guru!...'¹⁰

Swami Vivekananda saw in Guru Gobind Singh a powerful nation-builder, and greeted him as one of the last and greatest heroes of our race. In his conversations and dialogues with his brother disciples at Balaram Bose's residence in Calcutta in 1898, Swamiji spoke about the great power that used to be infused in those days into the initiates of Guru Gobind Singh. We quote at length from his *Complete Works* to show his love for the guru:

8. Cf. Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda* (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1976), Vol. 2, p. 999.

9. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), Vol. 3, pp. 366, 379. [Hereafter, *Complete Works*.]

10. Swami Vivekananda, *Letters* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970), pp. 425-26.

7. Swami Ranganathananda, *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1985), p. 99.

...Swamiji recited a popular *dohā* (couplet) of the Sikhs:

*'Savā lākh par ek cadhāūn,
Jab gurugobind nām sunāūn.*

'The meaning is: "When Guru Govind gives the Name, ie initiation, a single man becomes strong enough to triumph over a lakh and a quarter of his foes." Each disciple, deriving from his inspiration a real spiritual devotion, had his soul filled with such wonderful heroism!' While holding forth thus on the glories of this religion, Swamiji's eyes dilating with enthusiasm seemed to be emitting fire, and his hearers, dumb-stricken and looking at his face, kept watching the wonderful sight.

After a while the disciple said: 'Sir, it was very remarkable that Guru Govind could unite both Hindus and Mussulmans within the fold of his religion and lead them both towards the same end. In Indian history, no other example of this can be found.'

Swamiji: 'Men can never be united unless there is a bond of common interest. You can never unite people merely by getting up meetings, societies, and lectures if their interests be not one and the same. Guru Govind made it understood everywhere that the men of his age, be they Hindus or Mussulmans, were living under a regime of profound injustice and oppression. He did not create any common interest, he only pointed it out to the masses. And so both Hindus and Mussulmans followed him.... Yet, in Indian history, such an example is indeed very rare.'¹¹

Thus the journey from Sikh to Singh is clear. Yet, one has to view this from different

angles too. To quote Harbans Singh, 'Several Western writers have, for instance, been baffled by the transformation it underwent in the hands of the later gurus. Some of them have seen in it a falling off, a deterioration of Sikhism and reversal of the teachings of Guru Nanak.' But he himself clarifies the above doubt by saying that the inside view has been that the militant turn after the fifth guru was part of the social and historical evolution of Sikhism and that what happened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh was a natural culmination of Guru Nanak's vision.¹²

The birth of Sikhism and the growth of Sikh military power can be appreciated in the light of the conditions that prevailed in India during the fifteenth century. Guru Nanak was born to lead India to a new religious revival and a new social goal. He was a born mystic, devoted equally to the God of both Hindus and Muslims. And we see this feature in the hymns of Guru Gobind Singh as well. Guru Nanak founded a new religion with the object of bringing Hindus and Muslims together to live like brothers. Guru Gobind Singh appeared on the world stage with a mission to organize this religion so that the Sikhs stood out as a distinct community with their own way of life. He gave Khalsa a new slogan: '*Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh*', that is, the Khalsa belongs to God and it shall ever be victorious so long as it remains within His fold.

The auspicious occasion of the celebration of the tercentenary of the creation of Khalsa is also a time for self-analysis. Each one of us should ask oneself: How far have we applied the spirit of Guru Gobind Singh in our practical, religious as well as national life? How much more remains to be done? □

11. *Complete Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 514-15.

12. Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1991), Foreword.

Approach to Truth in Vedanta

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Sri Krishna's Unification of Physical Science and the Science of Spirituality

In India it was a continuous search for truth, breaking down barriers. This unifying vision, this continued search for truth in the external and the internal world, is what is given to us in three verses by Sri Krishna, to Uddhava:¹

*Prāyeṇa manuṣṇā loke
lokatattva vicakṣaṇāḥ;
Samuddaranti hi ātmānam
ātmanaiva āsucāśayāt.*

Generally speaking, in the world, human beings are capable of understanding the truth of the external world; by that knowledge they raise their life up from a primitive stage by their own efforts.

*Ātmano guruḥ ātmanaiva
puruṣasya viśeṣataḥ;
Yat pratyakṣānumānābhyām
śreyasau anuvindate.*

In a special sense, the human being's guru is oneself (unlike non-human species whose guru is nature); through direct sense perception and through (inductive and deductive) inference, this human being achieves (individual and social) welfare.

*Puruṣatve ca mām dhlrāḥ
sāṅkhya yoga viśāradaḥ;
Āvistarām prapaśyanti
sarva śaktyupabṛmhitam.*

In the case of human beings, intelligent and heroic people, equipped with the knowledge of the science and technique of spirituality, also realize Me in themselves endowed with infinite energies.

The individual is his own guru, says the verse; and in the case of an animal, nature is the guru. Sri Krishna has used a very strong language about human uniqueness here. Here the emphasis is on the human being adopting scientific methods for gaining knowledge of the external world. Whether it is technical efficiency or health and sanitation, in all things we study the world, understand it, have a grip on it, and use the knowledge to improve human life.

In modern life, we have done it to the maximum level possible. Never has it been like this before at any time in human history. That is a wonderful quality of the human mind. When it is properly trained, you get all these results. *Is this all?* Today's Western mind will say, yes, this is all. But Vedanta said ages ago: 'No. There is another capacity waiting to be developed.' What is that?—the same scientific temper engaged in discovering your deeper dimension, the profound divine focus that is within you. With the same training, continue the search further in that field. You have the capacity to realize your own true nature. Behind this tiny ego under the control of the genetic system is an infinite dimension of awareness, the Self, which makes you spiritually one with all. That whole science and technique by which you realize this Truth is known as *sāṅkhya-yoga*, 'the science and technique of spirituality'. I am not this tiny organic system, I am not a creature of the world outside. I am free, I am free. The focus of that freedom is not in the genetic system, but in that infinite Atman. That is my true nature.

Man must exercise his intelligence, try to understand the world, try to control it, use it for his own development. That is beautiful. If

1. *Bhāgavata*, 11.7.19-21.

that was all, then we can see, as we do today, the problems that arise when we end up with only that knowledge. Modern conditions tell us that in spite of all the high developments in the physical sciences, people are unhappy. Here is a human being, ever busy with robbing and killing people, criminally intent, or keen to commit suicide himself. What is wrong with him? He has got all the gadgets of physical science with him, but he is unhappy, he is tense; he is unfulfilled. Something has gone wrong—the whole society is topsy-turvy. Why is it so? Is this science enough? No, it is not. Sri Krishna says, and Vedanta says, study the individual in depth. A profound truth is lying hidden within him or her. Try to understand it, try to realize it; then, great things will come. Thus, it is here that we see the limitation of the study of the external world only. Can the knowledge of scientific truth end only with that? I often refer to this quotation from Einstein, 'Science can denature plutonium, but it cannot denature evil in the heart of man.' So, there must be another dimension to science and truth-seeking. It was that dimension, *in continuation of the earlier dimension*, that the Upanishads sought and discovered. But it comes to you as an information only. You have to strive to realize it for yourself. This level of science is not an external science meant for academic study or discussion. It is an experiential science. Says Sankaracharya in his Introduction to the *Brahma Sūtra* commentary: 'Knowledge of Brahman consummates in the experience of Brahman, (anubhava avasānam brahma vijñānam).'

This is what Vedanta says again and again; not belief but experiment and experience. It is, as Sankara says in his Introduction to the *Brahma Sūtra*, 'knowledge of Truth as it is, (*vastu tantra jñāna*). Vedanta says that in the inner world, all knowing tends to being; when you try to know your own true nature, you realize that you are That. In the external world, it is never so. If I study a star, I do not become a star; if I study a table, I do not

become a table. But when you study yourself in depth, you are That and you become That. You are rising, you are growing, you are developing into that Being. A Siddhartha becoming a Buddha, attaining enlightenment. A new man comes upon the scene, full of love, full of compassion. What a wonderful change comes in the human being!

Today, we have a society where, in spite of all the gadgets of civilization, there are so many human problems and, above all, the threat of nuclear war and civil violence. The hand that rocks a cradle and the hand that throws a bomb and kills a whole family—in both you can see the same hand; but how to change this hand to that hand? No physical science can help us there. There must be a science of man in depth which will make this possible.

The Science of Human Energy Resources

Prompted by love of truth and human welfare, Vedanta developed a science of man in depth and discovered the infinite immortal Self behind the finite mortal man. It may not have the mathematical precision of physical sciences where we are dealing with quantities. Here, you are handling yourself, and dealing with the quality of life and not quantity. A basic enrichment of the human system comes only from this kind of investigation. That is how the Upanishads developed this profound science of man in depth. Externally he looks like this; internally, he is something else. Man is a wonderful combination of freedom and necessity, of mortality and immortality. The *Mahābhārata* says:²

*Amṛtaścaiva mṛtyuśca
dvayam dehe pratiṣṭhitam;
Mṛtyurāpadyate mohāt
satyenāpadyate mṛtam.*

Both immortality and mortality are established in the body; by pursuit of delusion one attains mortality, and by pursuing truth one attains immortality.

That is the challenge thrown to human-

2. *Mahābhārata*, 12.169.28.

ity by the Vedanta. That, in this very life, within this body, we can build up a stable structure of character and personality, rich in wisdom and compassion, steady in mind, and fearless. External physical energies have no value orientation of good or bad. A storm, a lightning, or a sunshine—they are neither good nor bad. But once man handles them, we apply the word good or bad there. That good and bad lie not in nature itself, but within man. Here is a lamp. I can just forge a cheque in the light of this lamp, or can give a big donation as charity in the light of this lamp. The light is not responsible. I have utilized the occasion in terms of my understanding of myself in a right or wrong way.

Physical science gives knowledge and control of energies in external nature. And Vedanta gives us a beautiful investigation into the energy resources hidden in every human being. Here is the physical body of man, a centre of energy; we call it muscular energy. This gross energy is very ordinary, though at one time that was the only energy humanity had. A primitive man had command of this one energy only. Today that muscular energy has become very ordinary, because science can create tremendous energy—millions of times stronger than this muscular energy. Our rockets are nothing but million-fold muscular energy. Therefore, that energy is not of a very high nature.

When you look at the muscle, it is very big. We call it gross energy, but behind that gross energy, there is a subtle energy source. That is a nerve fibre. That nerve fibre is very small; but if that is cut, this muscle is dead; so in the human system we see a wonderful energy gradation. External energy is gross and limited, internal energy is subtle and unlimited. Behind this nervous system is the psyche, having still greater energy, but it is still more subtle. Nerve at least you can see, but psyche, you cannot. As Sir Charles Sherrington, the famous neurologist, mentions, the human mind is not visible to the senses and it will remain invisible for ever. Never

can you see the mind with any of the sense organs, and that mind contains so much energy. When there is a psychic breakdown, all muscles and nerves are dead—they have no energy at all. Thus, as you go deep into the human being, *you find energy organized on an ascending scale of subtlety, immensity and inwardness.*

Sankara, in his commentary on the third chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, mentions three words. They are—*sūkṣma, mahāntaśca, pratyagātma-bhūtāśca*. Human energy resources are organized 'on an ascending scale of subtlety, immensity, and inwardness.' As you go inward, energy is more in quality and quantity; it is more in subtlety, more in immensity, and more truly yourself. The muscle is not yourself, it is your instrument. The nerve is yourself, but when you go deeper, the psyche is yourself, the nerve is but an instrument, an object and not the subject. Then we cross the barriers of the psyche. Beyond the psyche is the true self, *ever the subject and never the object.*

'Infinite is its dimension (*puruṣam mahāntam*),' as the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* expressed it—the Infinite man is behind the finite man. The deeper you go, the more you find energy resources within you.

So, this inward penetration will bring us to this wonderful source of pure energy that is ever present there. Today we handle muscular energy, we handle mental or intellectual energy. These are ordinary, though they are extraordinary in dealing with the external world. But human problems cannot be solved by mere intellectual energy, especially when we see the spread of crime and delinquency today. Crime cannot be solved by intellectual energy, because some of the great criminals are intellectuals! They have plenty of intellect; but that intellect needs a little chastening. It must respect the other individual. He or she cannot do it, unless he or she sees something infinite in himself or herself, and is not tied down to this genetic system.

Each child has to evolve inwardly in a new dimension. That is beyond the intellect;

more education, more books, more scholarship, does not bring it. That is why, in India, we have the ancient tradition that a mere scholar is not highly respected. He may be a very great scholar, but unless he has developed love and compassion, he does not become the recipient of the highest respect and honour of the society. Therefore, this spiritual growth of the human being is absolutely necessary.

Vedanta on the Goal of Human Evolution

Today, the world is lacking in that growth, in spite of all the intellectual developments. You can see how one exploits the other, dominates over the other. Even in various scientific laboratories, you will come across this problem. Suppose there is a top scientist; he does not allow the juniors to come up; or else, he may appropriate their research results to himself. What is wrong there? Intellectual growth is there, but spiritual growth is lacking. In every department of life and work, you will find this happening. Human growth must continue beyond the intellectual level so that a spiritually developed person is at peace with himself or herself and, therefore, is at peace with the world also. If I have a confused mind, full of complexes and ambitions which take me beyond other peoples' purview, then I become a nuisance to the world. Why should I remain so? Can I not become a centre of infinite peace and compassion, and wish Godspeed to everybody else? That is the goal of human evolution according to Vedanta.

What is the goal of human life? Sri Ramakrishna answers in several places in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* that the goal of human life is to realize God. When Vivekananda gave a summary of Vedanta philosophy and spirituality, he put the inherent divinity in every human being as its basic truth:³

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by

controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

I often quote Bertrand Russell in this connection. He was an agnostic, not a man of religion, but, seeing the post-war situation, he says in his book entitled *Impact of Science on Society*: 'Unless man increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.' The more the knowledge, the more the sorrow. Primitive man had so little sorrow, because he had so little knowledge.

So, this knowledge must rise to wisdom. How does it rise to wisdom? This external knowledge, when it is connected with the knowledge of the infinite spiritual nature of man, rises to wisdom. That is what we see in a Buddha, in a Jesus, in a Sri Ramakrishna. They carried knowledge to the highest level. The energy that they manifested is an unlimited energy. Centuries have passed, millennia have passed, still their energy is working. How is it so? In physical language, we say that so many millions of miles away is the sun, yet it makes us feel hot here. That must be due to the tremendous energy that is being generated in the sun. Similarly, the Buddha lived 2500 years ago. Physically he is no more, but he exerts his influence and benefits millions of people even today. So also Jesus. But how do you trace the source of that energy? Did it come from their muscle? That muscle is dead and gone. Did it come from their intellect? They were very ordinary, compared to many other intellectuals who lived then. Jesus Christ was only a carpenter's son. But he gave such energy from within himself—from his spiritual dimension. How wonderful must be that power! The power of the spirit is the real power. That is to be accepted and one's life must be moulded in its light.

Napoleon was a great man of power and

3. Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 1, p. 124.

energy who used the sword to get everything done. When he was a British prisoner in the island of Saint Helena, he had time to think and assess his life. As a result, he gave the following thoughtful statements: 'There are two powers in this world—the spirit and the sword. The spirit has always vanquished the sword. Alexander, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself constructed great empires. On what did these empires depend? On the sword, and all of them have perished. Jesus alone founded an empire on the Spirit, on love. And even today, there are millions who will die for him.'

That is the confession from a great leader of men, who used the sword in the most consummate manner. But he bowed down to the power of the Spirit. Now, that spiritual energy resource, says Vedanta, is in everyone. It is the birthright of every human being. The newly-born child has that infinite resource within itself. We have to see that it is helped to manifest that resource day by day. That is unique in human development. For that development, the physical sciences can give us the first help—but they are not the only help. Do not stop there.

Therefore, our Vedanta teachers said, let the two streams flow together. In India, the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet together at a confluence, the Triveni Sangam, at Allahabad or Prayag. India treats it as a very holy place. Similarly, we need the two streams of knowledge, physical science and spirituality; more precisely, three streams, by including the science of values between the two, to make it a *triveni*. So, today, there is a possibility of this confluence to happen for total human development; one stream is well-developed, ie, physical science; the other two streams, the science of spirituality and the science of values, have become choked up in materialism and the intolerant ethnical religions. Writing to Sister Nivedita from London on 7 June 1896, Vivekananda had said:⁴

My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind

their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life....

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need for those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.

Spiritual growth is a fact. We have to re-convey that to our educational system. War outside starts from war within man. The passions of the heart upset the balance of the mind and the even course of the world. In the UNESCO, where humanism and mankind-awareness find expression, there is a preamble in which we find a spiritual concept introduced for the first time into a political document: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace much be constructed.'

Just before the Second World War, a British intellectual, Dr. Joshua Oldfield, gave a lecture in London in 1939. It appeared in a newspaper report; he was referring most likely to the Treaty of Versailles: 'More wars are caused by bad-tempered people seeking to discuss peace measures than by good-tempered people seeking to discuss war measures.'

In this dangerous world of ours, where one man's misbehaviour can make for much destruction of life and property, this subject is very, very important—practically as well as theoretically. Man is the finest product of nature's evolution. We must understand what he or she really is. If that is not understood, all that we have developed will become ashes in the hands of man. Roman civilization was destroyed by barbarians bred outside that civilization. But modern civilization, if it is destroyed, will be destroyed by barbarians bred within this civilization itself. The humanistic impulse must be developed; it comes only from a deeper level, and comes

4. Swami Vivekananda, *Letters* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984), pp. 294-5.

from a study of man in depth. When one develops spiritually, an ever-present truth comes to one: We are spiritually one; we are not separate from each other.

In the *Īśa Upaniṣad*, there is this great verse (6):

*Yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati;
Sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijugupsate.*

When one realizes all beings in the Atman and the Atman in all beings, by that understanding, he or she will not hate anyone.

This spiritual growth is a fact. That is an inward evolution. Fortunately, twentieth-century biology has got a new concept of evolution [dealt with in detail in the first part of this article]. The question arises at this stage: What shall be the goal of evolution at the human stage? This profound question was discussed during the week-long Darwin Centenary Celebrations at the Chicago University Congress of Biologists in 1959, the proceedings of which have come to us in three volumes. Says Sir Julian Huxley:⁵

In the light of our present knowledge, man's most comprehensive aim is seen not as mere survival, not as numerical increase, not as increased complexity of organization or as increased control of the environment, but as greater fulfilment—the fuller realization of more possibilities by the human species collectively and more of its component members individually....

Once greater fulfilment is recognized as man's ultimate or dominant aim, *we shall need a science of human possibilities*, to help guide the long course of psychosocial evolution that lies ahead. [Author's italics.]

That is the science that India developed in the Upanishads and has continued to be fostered by various sages from Buddha in the 6th century BC to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami

Vivekananda in our own times. That is the way and the goal of human evolution. If such spiritually evolved people increase in society, there is certainly going to be more peace, more harmony, and more real science. That is why Vedanta holds that these three streams of energy, *physical science, science of values and science of spirituality*, must go together for human fulfilment, individual and collective. *Vedanta considers the science of values as the link between the physical sciences and the science of spirituality.*

Human Life to Consist of Two Journeys

Vedanta speaks of two journeys to be conducted by every human being:⁶ One is an external journey in space and time. The other is the inward journey towards one's own infinite nature. That inward journey is only figuratively called a journey; but it really means understanding or realization. This can be done within this body itself, so that this body-mind complex becomes a laboratory for full human development.

When you apply it to the world outside, you develop the great systems of physical sciences; apply it within yourself, you develop the great science of spirituality, of which the science of values is the starting point. Vedanta helps everyone to convert his or her body into a laboratory. What does it do? He or she gets hatred from outside, it is processed and sent out as love. According to mere physical law, it cannot be. Vedanta says that a human being can react differently. If I get one unit of hatred, I can give back ten also! That shows that I am free and not an automatic machine. But here is a refined machine, where hatred comes into me, I process it, and send out only love and compassion.

In this context, it is interesting to note that in one of his lectures at the Chicago Darwin Centenary Congress, Sir Julian Huxley had said that up to the human level, the criterion of evolution was quantity, but at the human level, it has become quality. Both Ve-

5. Sol Tax, ed., *Evolution After Darwin: Hundred Years of Evolution*, Vol. 1, pp. 20-1.

6. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 3.3-9.

danta and modern biology do not ask you, 'Have you got a big house? Is it full of gadgets?' But they ask you, 'Have you got a big house? Are you peaceful there? Are you able to live at peace with each other, love each other?' According to Romain Rolland, Vivekananda had said that being itself a science, Vedanta gives an honoured place for all physical sciences, whether physical sciences accept Vedanta or not. A few physical scientists of the West respond to Vedantic truths today. Nuclear scientist Schrödinger, quotes the profound dictum of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (sixth chapter) which says, 'You are That (infinite Atman), *Tat tvam asi*.' So also, Prof. J.B.S. Haldane, an agnostic British microbiologist who went to India and settled down, worked, and died in Bhubaneswar, said in a lecture that when he went to Germany, he went to a microbiological laboratory of his friend. At the entrance, he saw inscribed this Upanishadic message '*Tat Tvam Asi*, You are That', and he said that that was a profound message about man, and that if anyone in the audience could understand this truth and live it, he would be happy, and he would consider his lecture there as rewarded. Modern science has taken humanity today to the space age. In this context, it will be interesting to listen to the warning given a few thousand years ago by the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.20):

*Yadā carmavat ākāśam
veṣṭayīṣyanti mānavāḥ;*

*Tadā devam avijñāya
duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣyati.*

Men may succeed in rolling up space like a piece of leather, yet they will not experience the end of their sorrows without realizing the luminous divine (truth within them).

Conclusion

When I travel in India and round the world year after year, I see a growing interest in the approach to truth in Vedanta as a continuation of the approach to truth in physical science. Vedanta is new even in India so far as the people at large are concerned. Swami Vivekananda took it out of monasteries and books and brought it before all humanity in India and abroad who responded to it with joy. This tremendous interest will ultimately help us overcome the present human distortions and establish a more peaceful humanistic world in the coming decades. That is the importance of Vedanta. It is a profound truth as relevant today as it was in ancient times; dogmas can become old and irrelevant, but truth never becomes old, it is always the same, *sanātana*—eternal, perennial. It was that inspiration that made Aldous Huxley write his famous book, *The Perennial Philosophy*. India herself calls it *Sanātana Dharma*. Vivekananda showed how it can be applied to human life in new ways and according to changing human situations. Its salutary global effect on human life and society will be witnessed in the coming centuries. □

The Buddhist Scriptures

The Buddhist canon is known as the *Tripitaka* or 'The Three Baskets', which contain the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Sūta Piṭaka* and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. In the first, *Vinaya*, one finds instructions about monastic life, both to monks and nuns. In the *Sūta*, there are important discourses of the Buddha. It is further divided into five sections, called the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the *Anguttara Nikāya* and the *Khuddaka Nikāya*—all Pali terminologies. The famous *Dhammapada* and *Jātaka* are in this section. The last, *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* consists of Buddhist psychology and metaphysics.

—from *The Buddhist Tradition*

RELIGION AND LIFE



Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

The twelfth President of the Ramakrishna Order, Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, used to meet devotees and admirers regularly and answer all their questions. These questions and answers were compiled and sent to us by Smt. Manju Nandi Mazumdar from Calcutta. The Prabuddha Bharata thanks Smt. Mazumdar for the pains taken in preparing this script. We hope our readers will benefit by the Revered Maharaj's answers to the numerous questions, which will be serialized from this month.

Maharaj, please tell us something about spiritual practice.

Spiritual practice (*sādhana*) means repeating God's name, singing His glories and leading a holy life, reading spiritual books, keeping regular contact with God's devotees, and so on. Even practising any one of these sincerely will do. Japa and meditation are, of course, a must. In the scriptures it is said that one can reach the state of steady wisdom (*sthitaprajña*) through *sadhana* only. The more a person longs for God, the nearer he moves towards Him. Sankara says in his commentary on the *Gītā*: 'In all the scriptures without exception, dealing with spirituality, whatever are the characteristics of the person of realization are themselves presented as the disciplines for an aspirant, because these characteristics are the result of effort.' He says, *sarvatra hi ādhyātma-śāstre kṛtārtha-lakṣaṇāni yāni, tānyeva sādhanāni upadiśyante yatna-sādhyatvāt*.

Does sadhana mean performing japa and meditation alone?

In a sense, yes. Performing japa and meditation is one form of *sadhana*. But then, adherence to truth always is also *sadhana*; not to deceive anybody is a *sadhana*; controlling the senses is a *sadhana*; discarding all the

luxuries in life also is a *sadhana* and so is devotion to God.

Maharaj, why is sadhana necessary?

Sadhana is practice. Earnest endeavour to reach an ideal or goal is *sadhana*. By practising music one can become a musician, and through regular physical exercise, one can be physically strong. Similarly, *sadhana* for God-realization will lead one to the Divine. Of all the types of *sadhana*, the most significant one for our life is *sadhana* for God-realization. First of all, we will have to fix an ideal or goal. If the goal is God-realization, then the only way to reach the goal is through *sadhana*. Without *sadhana* one cannot gain mental or spiritual strength, and without such strength God cannot be attained. By performing *sadhana* day after day, the aspirant becomes as pure and holy as God Himself, and thus divinity manifests in him or her. You cannot recognize gold when it is covered with dirt; but once the dirt is cleaned, the gold glitters of its own. Similarly, *sadhana* is necessary to remove the dirt or ignorance covering the mind and to reveal our innate divine nature. Spiritual practice will not be effective unless it is done with great earnestness. If, after fixing the goal, one struggles earnestly,

he will definitely succeed in his sadhana. He who sincerely aspires to reach that goal orients his entire life accordingly.

How necessary is forbearance (titikṣā) in sadhana?

Well, not much. Forbearance is only a means, not the end. Primarily, the aim is to be figured out—our aim is to concentrate the mind on God alone.

During the initial stages of our sadhana, *titikṣā* is necessary in order to keep our mind unperturbed in spite of happiness and sorrow. However, many people utilize forbearance as a means to become popular: by exhibiting their power of forbearance, people try to attain worldly honour and glory—this is the negative side of forbearance. For this reason, many holy monks practice *titikṣā* in secret and do not let others know about it. When I was at Uttarkashi, there was a monk who was respected by everyone. All that he had was a shawl, and nothing else. He used to keep the shawl very clean, and his body used to be always covered with that shawl. One day, a new monk came there and enquired him about a cottage (*kutiya*) for his stay. The monk I mentioned about earlier showed the newcomer his own hut and himself went off to some other place inside the village. Since he had no belongings at all, the new monk could not realize that the great monk had sacrificed his own place for his sake. The one who left was a monk of a high order and hence his forbearance was kept secret.

During his pilgrimage to Amarnath, while Swami Vivekananda was in Kashmir, he saw some monks travelling barebodied and commented that such acts only mean torturing the body. At a later date, however, Swamiji said that such type of hardship was also necessary, as otherwise luxury and comfort-seeking would overcome the aspirant. Excessive hardship has been, of course, denounced in the *Gītā* as elsewhere.

There is a temple in Chennai near the

Ramakrishna Math. A monk used to stay in that temple, who, except for purposes of personal cleanliness, never stirred out. He used to sit there and would eat whatever people gave him there itself. Once, he had bruises all over his body, and from our Math, it was suggested that he must be treated properly. So, he was told to move over to the Ramakrishna Math dispensary there. The monk, however, refused to move out of the temple even for treatment. This is also *titikṣā*.

What are the correct milestones which indicate that the aspirant is progressing in spiritual life?

The *Bhāgavata* (11.14.12) mentions the milestones. There is this verse:

*Mayyarpitātmanah sabhya
nirapekṣasya sarvataḥ;
Mayyātmanā sukham yat tat
kutaḥ syād viṣayātmanām.*

Here, Sri Krishna says that, in the case of a devotee who is free from all worldly desires and has offered himself to Him, He shines in the devotee's heart and no sense-bound creature can realize this joy. There are two more places in the *Bhāgavata* in the eleventh *skandha* where the milestones are mentioned. We must remember three distinct signs in this respect:

1. Love for God will increase;
2. Household attractions will decrease;
3. The concept of divinity will become more and more clear.

Reasoning may not be necessary here. In time, God will unfold Himself and all doubts will vanish. God is real—once this faith becomes strong, the whole life of the aspirant gets transformed. Sri Ramakrishna says, a thief comes to know that gold is hidden in the next room. Can he sit quietly there? He will be restless and will make all efforts to go to the next room to steal the gold. When the yearning for God becomes so intense, then only you realize that He is the most precious thing to possess. □

Acquaintance with Jainism

SANTILAL MUKHERJI

The birth anniversary of Lord Mahavira was celebrated on 29th last month. Sri Mukherji from Calcutta presents a beautiful synopsis of the birth, growth and development of the religion of peace, Jainism, in perspective.

After traversing Hinduism, when one passes to Jainism, one finds oneself landing in a different ambience. One does not have any longer the atmosphere of images and icons, of myths and formulae, of epics with their heroes and tales of chivalry and romance and idols, of avatars coming down for catharses; instead, one unquestionably feels the prevalence of a calm, philosophic atmosphere, which reverberates with the intonation of a single word, Peace: peace within oneself and peace all round. In Max Muller's view, it is the greatest of all things—*ta magista*.

How to acquire this most coveted thing is the basic question, in providing answer to which the moulders and fashioners of Jainism have built a system of philosophy and metaphysics and devised a code of conduct. He who can observe the code fully and strictly is a *jina*, ie, a true Jaina, a conquerer of the baser elements, of one's own nature and proclivity, and thus he makes ascent. The word Jaina has indeed come from the root *ji*, meaning 'victorious'.

The measures to conquer the baser elements and proclivities are both prohibitive and prescriptive in their essential nature. In the former category such maxims as non-violence, non-falsehood, non-theft, non-indulgence, non-acquisitiveness, and the like are there. The latter catalogue enjoins such rules of conduct or values as patience, forgiveness, honesty, compassion, suffering and sacrifice, and love and kindness.

These commands, which form the code of conduct for a Jaina, were not delivered, like Moses' Commandments, by a single individ-

ual all at once. They have come as the tenor of teaching of at least 24 perfected souls (*tīrthamkaras*) who, according to Jaina belief, had appeared at different time-cycles or *kalpas*. Their preachings are contained in *āgamas*—the ancient scriptures (of the Jainas). The agamas, like other ancient scriptures, deal with a number of subjects, one of which is the genesis and evolution of human societal civilization.

Evolution of Societal Civilization

The agamas trace the genesis of the human race to the first period of time, called *suṣama-suṣama*. It was the age of ideal bliss and felicity, which reminds one of Rousseau's conception of the state of nature at its initial stage—the infancy of the human race. There was no society then. Nor was it there during the second stage—the *suṣama* stage. It is only at the third stage, the *suṣama-duṣama*, that embryos of social life can be traced. It is attributed to the dissipation of the natural laws, which remind one of the breakdown of the natural order of Rousseau's conception. In Rousseau, the isolated individuals then entered into a contract with one another; in Jaina agamas, the *kulākāra* system or patriarchal society came into existence out of the chaotic conditions.

The Kulakaras

The *Digambara* Jaina tradition records as many as fourteen kulakaras, while the *Śvetāmbara* speaks of seven, ten or fifteen, who shaped human civilization by their respective contributions. The fifteenth kulakara was Rishabhadeva, also known as Adinatha, who invented and introduced [so it is said] alpha-

betic writing, which marks the beginning of the literary records.

The Tirthankaras

Rishabhadeva was also the first tirthankara who acquired competence to guide human race across the troubled ocean of life. And the other twenty-three succeeded him. A notable point here is that all the tirthankaras, rather, the jinas, were kṣatriyas and thus they were leaders of society (clans), and, as such, kulakaras (patriarchs) of their progenies. From which clan the first tirthankara, Rishabhadeva, emerged is rather mythical. He reminds one of the great Vyasa who is depicted to be contemporaneous with seven generations. Or, to have a Western analogy, Rishabhadeva may be likened to Methuselah, the pre-Noachian patriarch, who is stated to have lived 969 years.¹ Rishabhadeva is said to have existed in Mohenjodaro. Yet, by another account, Rishabhadeva was the father of King Bharata, who gave India its name, though according to the *Mahābhārata* Bharata was the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala. These inferences about the identity of Rishabhadeva may lack historicity, and so may not be fully relied upon. But, the old Hindu scriptures make definite reference to him. The earliest of the Vedas, the *R̥g Veda*,² mentions that a certain prince from Ayodhya was preaching (religion) 'with its roots deep in antiquity'. This religion was certainly Jainism in embryo stage, and the prince was no other than Rishabhadeva. The word Rishabha means bull, and the bull is the emblem of Jina Rishabha. Other tirthankaras too had their own emblems. Mahavira, the last of the twenty-four tirthankaras, had lion as his symbol. The symbol is indeed significant inasmuch as the literal meaning of the word *mahāvīra* is 'mighty hero'. Mahavira was the hero of heroes who fully conquered his own baser self and taught others the art and technique of doing so.

It is this vigour of Jina Mahavira that put

the religion of Jainism into its shape—the shape which we are acquainted with. The fact is, no religion is ever accomplished. 'It is ceaseless action...the outpouring of a spring, never a stagnant pool' (Romain Rolland). Twenty-three tirthankaras and many more *arhant ṛṣis* preached that form of *śramanic* religion which is now called Jainism, the religion of the jinas or conquerers.

After Rishabhadeva, not much is known of the lives and deeds of other tirthankaras, till we come to the last three—Neminatha, Parshwanatha and Mahavira.

The Last Three Tirthankaras

Neminatha, also known as Arishtanemi, is regarded by many a scholar to be a historical personality, and by some as the cousin of Sri Krishna. The story goes that he was engaged to a sister of Kamsa, but during the wedding he became a totally different person on seeing the pitious sight of animal slaughter to celebrate the event. He instantly renounced the world in search of omniscience which he attained in due course.

Parshwanatha was the son of Ashwasena, the king of Varanasi. Parshwanatha too left his princely home at a very early age and became a wandering monk (*sramana*). He also attained illumination, became all-knowing. He laid down his life at the Parasnath hill in Bihar, traditionally called the *sammeta śikhara*, which was the scene of the passing away of nineteen other tirthankaras. (Mahavira, however, passed away at Pawapuri, near Nalanda). Incidentally, for the jinas, as well as devout Jainas of later times, death is a kind of volitional act: they fast unto death when the body is in a tottering state and no longer able to hold the soul.

Bhagavan Mahavira

The last of the twenty-four tirthankaras was a historical personality, even though myths may surround his advent. His life span has also been exactly dated: it is 598-526 BCE, which was also largely the period of Lord Buddha's life and action. Mahavira is said to be the older contemporary of the Buddha

1. *Genesis*, 5.27.

2. *R̥g Veda*, 10.166.

(563-483 BCE) and is also said to be his kinsman. This period was a great period of religious ferment from Athens to the Pacific, with Zoroaster (660-580 BCE) preaching in ancient Iran, and Lao-tzu (640-517 BCE) and Confucius (551-479 BCE) preaching in China. Jeremiah (640-585 BCE) and Isaiah (770-700 BCE) and some early Greek philosophers also belong to this period.

The Legend

Mahavira was to have his latest incarnation for the purpose of obtaining illumination (*kevala-jñāna*). He at first guided his course into a brahmin family but gods desired otherwise: they decided that he should be born, in the rightness of things, into a kshatriya family; rather, into a vrāta kshatriya royal home like his forerunners. Mahavira was born in the family of King Siddhartha and Queen Trishala (according to some, in 610 BCE). As it is often narrated in cases of prophets and saints, Mahavira's birth was surrounded by all signs of celestial joy. Stars shone more brilliantly, flowers were scattered from heaven, divine music played, and so on. Ever since the birth of Mahavira the wealth of the royal family began increasing, and so the boy was named Vardhamana. Vardhamana grew up under the loving care of his parents and elder brother to whom he was greatly attached. Though not forgetting his mission, Vardhamana waited till his parents passed on, and thereafter, with the permission of his elder brother and royal councillors, he went forth to the forest in search of Truth. He did not, however, go alone as in the case of Siddhartha Sakyamuni, but was followed by a royal procession, maybe as his escort.³ He sent the royal entourage back, discarded his royal robes and put on the garments of an ascetic. He also pulled out his hair. Plunging

into the deep recesses of the jungle, he began practising austerities. This continued for twelve long years and on the thirteenth, illumination broke upon him—the knowledge of the Supreme became his own. The number 13 is not inauspicious for the Jainas. Those who believe in following thirteen years of spiritual practices for enlightenment are called *terapanthins*, 'the followers of the path of thirteen years'.

It was after his illumination that Vardhamana came to be called Mahavira—the Mighty Hero—the conqueror not of peoples and lands but of his own self.

The Teachings

Vardhamana was, however, his sobriquet, not assumed by himself but given by his family. In the Buddhist texts he has been called Nataputta.⁴ Since he was from Vaisali, he was sometimes also called Vaisaliya.

What did Mahavira teach? Indeed he taught nothing new: he just realized the truths preached by his forerunners, the 23 tirthankaras, collected and supplemented them, and framed a practical philosophy and code of conduct for both the *śrāvakas* and *ya-tis*—householders and monks. Doubtless, it is in the post-Mahavira period that the sramana religion of the tirthankaras and arhant rishis acquired the name Jainism. Mahavira was the transmitter of a faith which crystallized in his austerities.

Jainism and Buddhism

Though Sakyamuni was a junior contemporary of Mahavira, it should be stated here that Jainism and Buddhism were not contemporaneous religions. Further, inspired by the instance of the 'leading light for the new age', several rival sects of the sramana faith came to be united and started following the Nigantha Nataputta's code, which came to acquire the name Jaina dharma. A new light was also emerging at the same time from

3. There is a dispute between the Svetambara and Digambara sects here. According to the former, Mahavira entered the ascetic life at the age of thirty, by which time he was a married man and also had a daughter. On the

other hand, the Digambara sect holds that Mahavira became an ascetic during the lifetime of his father, and never married.

4. Cf. George Buehler, *Indian Antiquity*.

the person of Gautama Sakyamuni. According to one view, which the Archeological Department of India entertains, the two teachers met with each other at Sravasti, which the Jainas designate as Sahet Mahal (near Balrampur of Gonda district in Uttar Pradesh) during as many as two dozen *cāturmāsya*s. Chaturmasya is the four-month period of the rainy season when, traditionally, itinerant monks stay in some place. Now, there is one more view which says that the two never met. They quote Hermann Jacobi to say that though the Buddhists were interested in Mahavira and refer to him more than once in their canons, there is no mention at all of Shakyamuni Buddha or the Buddhas in any of the old Jaina sutras. Agreeing with the second view, one has to follow Mahavira as a solitary itinerant monk, disseminating the fundamentals of Truth. During the period of his itinerancy, he is said to have discarded his scanty clothes and become a sky-clad one, Digambara. According to *Kalpasūtra*, the main source of Mahavira's life, he succeeded in converting several thousand persons, including a number of kings. Then, at the age of seventy-two, while delivering his last sermon, he renounced his body as though signifying the fulfilment of his mission. He was entitled to his own liberation some thirty years earlier, but held it back till he had shown the path to his people.

Formalization of Scriptures

For several centuries after Mahavira, canons remained unwritten and were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth with that wonderful accuracy characteristic of the Vedas. Sometime during the 3rd or 4th century CE, the Jaina canons came to be collected and written by one Bhadravaka. The scriptures thus collected were forty-five in number, and called the *siddhānta*. These 45 texts are classified and re-classified into a number of categories—*aṅga*, *upāṅga*, *mīla-sūtra*, etc. There appear to have been some older works called the *pūrvā* but practically nothing is known of them. It is said that

they have not been really lost but are concealed in utter secrecy by the Digambara sect, and hope is entertained that some day, they may be brought out. Apart from scriptures mentioned above, there are a number of Purāṇas and Itihāsas.

There are other branches of study which the Jainas have made significant contribution to: the most signal of them is in the fields of grammar and lexicography. *Amarakośa*, the Sanskrit lexicon, is a Jaina work. The Jaina contribution to architecture is no less laudable. The representative works are the colossal statue of Gomateswara at Sravana Belgola, the Parshwanatha temple at Halebid, both in Karnataka and the Khajuraho temples in Madhya Pradesh.

The Jaina view of life is that it is not transitory, but a stepping stone for ascending to a better and higher life in the next incarnation through the observance of the prescribed code of conduct. The code of conduct, mentioned in the beginning, emphasizes moderation and renunciation for bringing about peace in oneself and peace all around. Peace can be obtained by whetting the renunciatory impulse, and the Jaina architecture, especially the temples, wrote this down in invisible letters, and thus came to appear in the marble of cold lifelessness.

Spread of Jainism

Though having originated in the traditional 'middle country', the Mithila part of Aryavarta, the extension of Jainism to other parts of the land, specially to the southern part of the peninsula, did not take much time. It should be noted, however, that its spread in the South is not owing to any proselytising effort on the part of Jaina preachers, but to a rather accidental cause. During the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, a devastating famine swept Northern India (c. 317 BCE), which led to large-scale immigration of Jaina monks to the South. The great Jaina scholar, Bhadrabahu, led the monks southward. Yet another scholar, Stulabhadra, called a council of Jaina scholars in the meantime at

Pataliputra and systematized the scriptures. Famine over, immigrants returned with many of their followers and refused to accept the work of Stulabhadra as authentic, saying that Bhadrabahu, now gone, was alone an authority. Some Jainas followed the example of Mahavira and discarded their clothes as the final outer mark of renunciation. Stulabhadra got the Pataliputra Council sanction and permitted his followers to wear immaculate white clothes. It was thus that the two groups, Digambara and Svetambara, were created.

The Digambaras not only did carry the Jaina dharma southward but also enriched the literature in local dialects, especially of the Tamil land. It is held that Tamil grammar is a Jaina contribution. The popular versions of grammar, *Nannūl* by Pavananthi and *Nālaḍiyār*, are Jaina works.⁵ What is more, even *Kural* by Tiruvalluvar is supposed to be a Jaina contribution inasmuch as the terms the great poet uses there are essentially Jaina—he speaks of arhats and other Jaina technical terms. The Kannada literature bears more indelible Jaina imprint.

The Waning

Historians record the spread of Jainism from the 4th century BCE to the 12th century CE. It held sway over a large segment of the Indian population both in the North and the

South. In the South, the cult of penance was swept away by that of devotionism—both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, which increasingly captivated the minds of people. In the North also, the Jaina numbers slowly dwindled, except for Rajputana (now Rajasthan) which became the Jaina stronghold. It is a curious fact of history that, though the religion originated among the royalty, it is among the mercantile classes of Rajputs and among Gujaratis that the religion of abnegation and penance survived. They fashioned their lives upon the Jaina tenets, and so highly were they respected that Akbar the Great prohibited animal slaughter in the neighbourhood of Jaina temples. Partially though, the emperor upheld the Jaina canon that all Jainas have a right to live unmolested. When all is said and done, Jainism is a vibrant religion today.

The Philosophy

So much for the history, which is less important than its philosophy. The Jaina philosophy is largely metaphysical, which includes epistemology, with its pointed direction towards eschatology. According to Jaina philosophy, there are two fundamental existences: *jiva* or Atman and *dravya* or substance. In its essential nature, the *jiva* is pure consciousness and knowledge. It is the knower, but normally remains under ignorance (*avidyā*). It is to be remembered that the Jainas have a very wide concept of *jiva*. Atman is not inherent only in animal and plants, but is also present in rocks, water and so on. *Dravya* or substance is invested with quality (*guṇa*) and is capable of being modified, having the characteristic of development. Apart from *jiva* and *dravya*, there are five other categories of non-living entities: condition of movement (*dharma*), condition of rest (*adharma*), space, time and matter. The *jivas* and five other categories make this universe which was never created by any architect called God or preserved by Him. Here is the foundation of the charge of atheism against Jainism. Jaina ontology emphatically denies that God, supposed to be the author and preserver of the

5. We thank Swami Asutoshanandaji of Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, for the following information: *Nannūl* is a book on grammar by the Jaina Pavananthi (12 CE) which also highlights ethics, student life, etc. *Nālaḍiyār* was written by a group of Jain ascetics (in the 3rd or 4th century CE). 'Nālaḍiyār' ('nāngu' + 'aḍi') is poetry in four lines. Great ethical and philosophical utterances have been rendered in poetic form. This work lays great stress on renunciation. Though nothing of certainty is known about Tiruvalluvar, he is considered to be a Hindu with a deep knowledge of Jainism. Saivites consider him their own and his image is taken in procession along with 62 others during the Arpathu Moovar festival.

universe is real and everything else is unreal. Contrarily, whatever exists is real: thus, life is real, the universe is real. The universe and life are eternal but undergo modifications. So does the Atman (*jina*). The jina evolves by reincarnation and karma. The universe is inhabited by manifold creatures born according to their past actions. Thus living beings of sinful actions are born again and again, and enveloped by *avidyā* they seem to enjoy the transmigratory *samsāra*. Slowly, the soul may seek to liberate itself from the bonds of karma. Liberation implies transcending the cycle through annihilation—*nirjara* of karma or, forsaking karmic adherence. This is done mainly through a sturdily disciplined conduct as per the formula given by the Jaina men of enlightenment. And when the soul attains *nirvāṇa*, it remains in eternal bliss through all kalpas.

Jaina Ontology

Jaina ontology speaks of four requisites (*ratna*) for nirvana: (1) right knowledge, (2) right faith, (3) right conduct, and (4) austerities. The last one is for ascetics alone, while the first three is for all. Right knowledge was acquired by the jinas and they have diffused it: persons of right faith accept and model their conduct according to it. The Jainas are pragmatic in the sense that they have classified the initiates into two broad groups: laity (*sravakas*) and ascetics (*yatis*). The rules for the two differ slightly. Five vows are binding for the yati: (1) non-violence (*ahimsā*), (2) truthfulness (*satya*), (3) non-stealing (*asteya*), (4) non-indulgence (*brahmacarya*) and (5) non-covetousness (*aparigraha*). They are also binding on the laity, but less rigidly. In case of the latter, they become *anuvratas*, smaller vows. Ahimsa is a principle of conduct both for the laity and the ascetics. For the yati, ahimsa must be practised as non-injury to all living beings—from the tiniest insect to the human being. Regarding this, a comment needs to be made: the absurdities of extremes and its rigour will dissipate and look benign if set against the extreme cruelty perpetrated by

human beings on other species, and is reduced to a principle of action—a rule for everyone. This is, in other words, the maxim for respect towards all life, a geocentric view as opposed to the anthropocentric one.

The Venerable One has declared...As is my pain when I am knocked or struck with a stick, bow, fist, clod, or potsherd; or menaced, beaten, burned, tormented or deprived of life; and as I feel every pain and agony, from death down to the pulling out of a hair; in the same way, be sure of this, all kinds of beings feel the same pain and agony as I when they are ill-treated. For this reason, any sort of being should not be beaten, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor deprived of life...This constant, permanent, eternal, true law has been taught by the wise who comprehend all things.⁶

The foundation of the Jaina conduct is a number of vows, both big and small. The vows for laymen, besides adherence to ahimsa, are directed to check thoughtlessness and excitement, the two great banes of human life. This is subduing the self, without which true happiness cannot be achieved.

Ascetics and Renunciation

There are both male and female ascetics among the Svetambaras, while the Digambara sect permits male ascetics alone. In the case of Svetambaras, the ascetics of either sex have to submit to the same rules of abnegation and discipline. They are to live by begging, and only on that amount of foodstuff as is absolutely essential for supporting the body. He or she must renounce all things that come under the category of earthly possessions, but never the body. For it is in this human body that one can attain liberation. Besides one's body, one should not shun one's guru. The study of sutras is a must as that is essential for spiritual practices. Thus, apart from the four—one's own body, guru, discipline and study of sutras—nothing else

6. *Uttarādhyayana*.

is to be regarded as one's own. The female ascetics are to practise a positive social duty: they are to diffuse education and impart instruction among the womenfolk of Jaina households, by visiting them in their itinerancy. This peripatetic teacher's role of the female ascetics was of high social value in those days when there was no system of public instruction for one thing, and women were kept outside the pale of educational system for another.

Modality of Death

'Death is the birthright of every person born'—this aphoristic truism rings through the entire Jaina ontology. It follows from this that its modality should be planned: a kind of termination of life at will. The modality for the Jaina ascetics in particular is self-starvation. It is resorted to when the ascetic comes to feel that no further advancement towards liberation can be made in this body. Just like a tattered piece of cloth, the body is then cast away voluntarily in a peaceful, non-violent way. It is certainly no suicide, as it is commonly misunderstood. What about the laity? The same procedure is prescribed for the layman also. The ideal is, a person may remain a householder, observing strict principles all through till old age creeps in. Then, he should renounce family life and become an ascetic with the vow to die of self-starvation. This will hasten his liberation. The story of history goes that Chandragupta Maurya, the great emperor, ended his life in this manner. When he felt that he had become old, he abdicated the throne and joined the Jaina monastic order, and died of self-starvation at Sravana Belagola in Karnataka.

Social Philosophy

It has been said that the Jainas do not have any social philosophy. This statement is rather misleading. Elements of social philosophy can be discerned in any religious lore inasmuch as the human being is at its focal point. Jainism emphasizes undivided perfection. Organically, a society's quality depends upon the quality of its members. Qualitative

improvement of a society's members is, in Swami Vivekananda's arresting phrase, another name for *man-making*. The Jaina philosophy wants to 'make man'—make the individual perfect in his behaviour. Thus, behaviourism, a new philosophy for the Western world perhaps, carries a hue of Jainism. But, Jaina behaviourism is not materialistic in its odour; rather, it is spiritualistic. Jainism says that it is not the life of matter but that of the Spirit that should be perfected: the growth of the soul is to be striven for. Now, since souls are not classified or categorized, there cannot be any caste system in the social arena. Thus, one of the tenets of the Jaina social theology is the emphatic denial of the caste system. This underscores the social egalitarianism of the Jainas. Jaina catholicity is found extended in marriage, and in the incorporation of Hindu festivals and customs into their own modes of worship. Originally, the Jainas worshipped the tirthankaras alone; slowly, however, the Hindu custom of supplication to the deities and their worship found its way here also. This certainly speaks of the flexibility of their tenets or the non-fundamentalism of Jaina faith.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Jainism to social philosophy is the doctrine of non-violence. Non-violence, implying respect for all life, as a clear precept was undoubtedly delivered by Jainism. This precept teaches avoidance of violence for solving intra- and inter-group rivalries and conflicts on any plane and was largely spread broadcast by Mahatma Gandhi. There is another aspect of the doctrine which may be described as a balance in the eco-system. It is now clearly realized that human beings cannot survive on this planet by eliminating other lives. Jaina doctrine emphasizes this aspect of peaceful co-existence. Violence to plants and destruction of forests cannot but spell doom for many other species. Thus, this may be termed 'enlightened self-interest' of a kind. This metaphysical tenor of Jainism—this biocentrism, so to say—is of much social import.

Epilogue

Jainism has hardly a following of four million people, and that too is mostly in India. But unlike Buddhism which had at one time practically engulfed the entire land, it has survived in its cradle-land of Bharata. The four million or so Jainas are now spread all over the country as a result of the impact of urbanization and commercialization (Jainas mostly being traders and businessmen). But Jaina influence on the Western outlook is quite perceptible to the discerning eye. It is keenly felt in the modern world. And the person who scattered it most was Mahatma Gandhi. A *sanātani* Hindu though, he grew up in Jaina surroundings and modelled his life and view on the Jaina precepts. He culled out two distinctive principles of action from the Jaina view of life: *non-violence* and *code of personal conduct*. It is by acquiring Jaina qualities that he became a true Hindu. And the spread of the Hindu view of life may considerably be traced to his role (and life). Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan also contributed to this

but by diffusing what is 'chemically pure', to use the expression of Aldous Huxley, in Hinduism. Mahatma Gandhi's dissemination clearly bears the imprint of the Jaina view.

The reason for Jainism's survival in the land of its birth is attributed largely to the equal emphasis on lay and monastic callings of the faith. But the lay followers of the faith are not that faithful to its demands, certainly under the stress of changed modern life. The Jaina *munis* are aware of this and acknowledge the inevitability. They, therefore, have started endeavouring at its adaptability. And it has resulted in the birth of a new movement: *Anuvrata*—the Doctrine of Small Vows. The doctrine is both efficacious and utilitarian that seeks to purge modern life of the accumulated vices and hold out values that make life as religious as possible under changed and changing circumstances. No religious system is perdurable. The present Jaina preceptors have recognised this eternal truth and thus presented modified doctrines like *Anuvrata* and *Preksha Dhyana*. □

Nivedita's Love for India

It was the summer of 1903. Nivedita was visiting Midnapore district of West Bengal. Hundreds had gathered at the railway station to greet this great lady. As soon as people saw Nivedita at the door of her coach in the train, they shouted in unison: 'Hip, hip, hurray!' They thought that since Nivedita was an Irish lady—an Englishwoman—she would be pleased to hear the European way of welcoming her. However, it appeared that the lioness that was Nivedita was angered at this. She signaled to the public to stop. She said: "'Hip, hip, hurray'" is a joyous exclamation of the English when they are victorious. But, being Indians, you should never use this at all.' Saying this, Nivedita raised her right hand in the style of slogan-shouting, and shouted thrice: 'Wahe Guruji ki fateh! Bol Babuji ki Khalsa!' The enthused public shouted with her in unison.

During her stay there, apart from lecturing for five consecutive days, Nivedita inaugurated a unit where local youth could practice martial arts. She herself wielded the sword, practised with the dagger and turned the *lathi* in various ways, to the dismay of all. What was more, Nivedita taught one or two local ladies the art of firing too. The importance of this will be enhanced when we remember that India was not free then.

—Bharater Nivedita (Bengali)

Muṇḍaka Upanisad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

स वेदैतत्परमं ब्रह्म धाम
यत्र विश्वं निहितं भाति शुभ्रम्।
उपासते पुरुषं ये ह्यकामा-
स्ते शुक्रमेतदतिवर्तन्ति धीराः॥१॥
*Sa vedaitat-paramam brahma dhāma
yatra viśvaṁ nihitaṁ bhāti śubhram;
Upāsate puruṣaṁ ye hy-akāmās
te śukram-etad-ativartanti dhīrāḥ. (III.ii.1)*
He knows the supreme Abode, Brahman, in which is placed the universe, which shines radiantly. Those wise ones who have become desireless worship the Person (*puruṣa*) and pass beyond this human seed (of rebirth) here.

Such a person sees the whole world as the manifestation of Brahman, purity and perfection personified—first within himself and then outside of himself and in the world. That is, he realizes that the whole cosmos is founded or placed in Brahman and that he is a part and parcel of that cosmos which shines effulgent and holy. This is the standard to judge whether one's experience is self-delusion or truth. There is only purity (*śuddhatā*) and enlightenment (*jyoti*). Pure effulgence, and not the darkness of ignorance, exists everywhere. Those who worship such a wise soul and are without any desire, go beyond the cycle of birth and death.

The limitations of the human body, the ego and selfishness having disappeared, this wise person maintains his faculties properly when he interacts with the world. This is the concept of *jīvanmukti* as opposed to *videha-mukti* in which the soul is liberated only when the body dies. The stable, mature persons break the chain of rebirth, which suggests their being born in future through the biological process.

कामान्यः कामयते मन्यमानः
स कामभिर्जायते तत्र तत्र।
पर्याप्तकामस्य कृतात्मनस्तु
इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामाः॥२॥
*Kāmān-yah kāmayate manyamānāḥ
sa kāmabhir-jāyate tatra tatra;
Paryāpta-kāmasya kṛtātmanas-tu
ihaiva sarve pravilīyanti kāmāḥ. (III.ii.2)*
He who covets desirable things and broods over them is born again here, along with his desires. But for one who has got his wishes fulfilled, who is a perfected soul, all desires vanish, even while here on earth.

We are desirous of many objects, because we see the merits in those desired things. We dwell on the virtues of the objects and sanction our desires for them by providing many reasons. This is so because these virtues have a tremendous hold on us and continue to roll over and over in our mind. We arrange the rationale in favour or against those objects. The sense of duty or oughtness is a mere euphemism to give a sense of dignity to our desires; for even without that sense we find ample justification for what we do or do not want to do. If this is the tendency while we are alive, then at the time of death there will linger in the mind many unfulfilled desires. These propel the *jīvātmā* to choose the family, place and circumstances in which he will be reborn to fulfil some of those desires at least. With the fall of one body that soul with unsatiated desires roams around the whole world to find the very place and circumstances where there will be ample scope to fulfill those desires, with the approval or sanction of Isvara, the keeper of everyone's *samskaras*. We think that only some things

are good for us; this is incorrect thinking because every human being is *dvikāla darśi*, knowing only partially the past and the present. However, Isvara is *trikāladarśi*, the knower of the past, present and future. Isvara may not fulfill such desires as are not good for us. We have taken shelter under Him to let Him decide what is good or bad for us, and to permit us to fulfil those desires which conduce to our good.

If, however, we have been able to make ourselves *āptakāmas* having become fed up with this life and its ephemeral, joyless things and want them no more, but only desire God, we are then desireless and for us the motive factor of rebirth is absent. So, a person starts his life with innumerable desires. Slowly, he weeds out the desires by evaluating and analysing them, and finally realizing that he is only subjecting himself to physical and even intellectual enjoyments. Then he sets out to reach the final goal of life, that is, to become desireless. His aspiration is to become desireless. This is the only desire that does not bind us. So his desires are annihilated even in this very life. So, even here—in this very life—desires are removed. The distinction between a *jīva* and a *jīvanmukta* is that the latter is no longer under the clutches of any desire and has snapped the chain of birth and death by becoming *paryāptakāmaḥ* and *kṛtakāmaḥ*. His desires being wiped out even here, he becomes an *ātmajñā* or a *brahmaniṣṭha*.

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो

न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्य-

स्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनुं स्वाम् ॥३॥

Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo

na medhayā na bahunā śrutenā;

Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas-

tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām.

This Self is not to be attained by instruction (or study); nor by the intellect; nor through much hearing. By the very fact that the aspirant seeks for It does It become attainable. To such a one that Atman reveals Its own nature.

First it is said negatively what is not required to attain the knowledge of Brahman. There is a distinction between *jñāna-gocaratā* and *anubhava-gocaratā*. The first is to understand intellectually and the second is to experience within oneself. This does not mean that we should not study the scriptures, but we should not think that just by that we can arrive at the goal. This mantra falls in the category of *upadeśa*, outlining the sadhana or method of reaching the goal. By *madhya-dīpikā nyāya*, the words *na labhyaḥ* are linked with *pravacana*, *medhā* and *śruti*. Pravacana is oratory, the art of expressing precisely and correctly in words. Nothing is spoken in a half-hearted, slipshod, incoherent manner. Merely the study of scriptures is not enough, for that scriptural knowledge is to be raised from the level of intellectual comprehension to experience. That study may give us a conception of the goal we are trying to reach, but this understanding is the method, not the end. It is only to remove the dirt, so that the Atman may manifest its pristine glory, just as by removing the dirt on the diamond it shines forth.

Medhā is that part of memory which contains all the good advice from well-wishers, elders, teachers and friends and all the ideas received from the scriptures. This Atman is not obtained by sheer remembrance of good teachings. A man of gigantic intellect is not necessarily a 'knower of the Self'. Nor can It be reached by hearing and learning a lot. They are all means and supporting virtues, no doubt, but even collectively they are not the cause of Self-knowledge. So, listening, as much as speaking, does not lead to the goal, but it helps clarify ideas. What is necessary is to co-ordinate all these parts of the mind and turn the mature understanding into personal experience.

History shows that some rare persons have achieved the spiritual goal. How is It obtained? The Upanishad says that by an intense desire for that wisdom or for the experience of that Reality the goal is attained. The

Atman shines forth in direct proportion to the efforts put in. There has to be a back-breaking, intense, tireless, persistent austerity or sadhana. Being desireless in reference to worldly objects, one merely gives scope for the Self to manifest Itself. One has to seek in a one-pointed manner. Till the desire for the Self is keen to the extent of nearly killing, It will not be realized.

Sri Ramakrishna had not read the scriptures; he had only four pillars to stand upon, viz earnestness, sincerity, honesty and purity. He kept at his spiritual effort till it came to the point that he even wanted to destroy himself. His sole desire to have the vision of the Divine Mother eliminated all other desires, and immediately he had the beatific vision of the Divine Mother.

So, it is being said here that the person who desires only the Self, leaving behind all desire for worldly objects, to him only the Atman reveals itself. The *Yoga Sūtra* calls this

para vairāgya, supreme renunciation. The moment the oneness of the universe with one's own nature is realized, there is the experience of *jāṭismāratvam*; it is like the scenes of a film fleeting before the mind—incidents of past lives keep on occurring. One is then horrified to think that one has spent so many lives in the pursuit of so many useless things. The *vairāgya* cultivated by disciplining oneself only saturates the mind, but not one's whole being. However, when *para vairāgya* occurs there is a simultaneous remembrance of past lives and one passes into *nirvikalpa samādhi* in which there is liberation, ie the awareness of Atman. Atman unfolds Its own form and nature to that aspirant.

Thus the knowledge of the Atman is available to anyone who wants It and It alone, with an open heart. Whoever accepts and welcomes It, the Atman chooses him as the person worthy of It and reveals Itself to him.

(to be continued)

Good Friday and Easter

It was 3 pm on that fateful Friday. One of the greatest jewels of God, one of the softest beings born on earth, was sacrificed on the cross. To commemorate this painful event, Christians throughout the world fast and mourn on that day each year. Since the very early period, fasting on this Friday was in practice among Christians. In the Middle Ages, there was a custom in some places of a ritualistic burial: the cross was laid down in a 'holy' grave in the tomb chapel, and covered with a piece of cloth, called *sudarium*. Orthodox Christianity calls it Great Friday. On that day the Orthodox Christian churches have a custom of re-enacting a burial procession as it was during the time of Christ. Christ is represented by his image, and this image is called *epitaphion*. The Roman Catholic Church restructured its service in 1956. Accordingly, from then on, there was to be a whole-day programme of prayer, scripture reading, veneration of the cross and the communion of people present on that day.

Two days after his death, Christ resurrected. According to St. Luke's Gospel, a man named Joseph went to Pontius Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. That granted, he 'wrapped the holy body in linen and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.' Some women wanted to anoint the Lord. 'Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning ... they found not the body of the Lord Jesus....' This resurrection is a joyous festival, called Easter, for Christians. The word Easter comes from the Anglo-Saxon term *Eastre*, the name of the goddess of spring. Easter is the most blissful festival, and central to the Christian year.

This year, Good Friday falls on 20 April.

Sister Nivedita Girls' School Centenary

Benediction by
SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

The President of the Ramakrishna Order, Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, participated in the concluding function of the Sister Nivedita Girls' School centenary. We reproduce his benediction here.

Today we are on the last day of the celebration of the Sister Nivedita Girls' School Centenary. Since the last two days, these functions have been going on, and today is the third and final function. I am very glad to find that Calcutta—where Nivedita spent the last 13 years of her life, where she did very great work, and where she was associated with great thinkers, leaders, poets, artists, etc—in this city today we are gathering to honour this great Sister Nivedita whose original name was Miss Margaret Noble. When we had the plague epidemic in Calcutta in 1898, Sister Nivedita did great service to look after the people and to clean up the lanes and bylanes of Calcutta. She is well known all over the world and particularly in our country. Her books are a delight to read, especially *The Master as I Saw Him*. That is a wonderful book on Swami Vivekananda. It is a masterly book, by a masterly mind, on a great master. I myself have been charmed by that book, and must have read it four or five times. We can see the originality, the tremendous urge of thought, the capacity to interpret a great teacher, in this great disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She was associated with various types of activities. She herself was a teacher in London, but in India she started this institution for women's education; in those days our girls used to be married at the age of 8 or 10 and, therefore, they had no opportunity for education. So, she had older women and young widows as her students in the beginning; but today that school has become a full-fledged higher secondary school.

She soon became associated with India's national problems and with India's national leaders, and became transformed into a great lover of India and her ancient culture. Many of our leaders in politics, administration, teaching, and art were associated with Sister Nivedita. Poets like Rabindranath Tagore, artists like Abanindranath Tagore, and political leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, all paid high tributes to Sister Nivedita. Her courage exactly tallied with what Swami Vivekananda had wanted. Nivedita was a lioness, endowed with tremendous energy and courage, and was also very practical. I have read many tributes paid to her by various thinkers and leaders in India. Just after her passing away in 1911, after thirteen years of work in this great country, an article was written by poet Rabindranath Tagore in the Bengali monthly *Prabasi*. I loved to read that homage of the great poet. Here are a few beautiful passages from *Prabasi*:

I have not seen in anyone else such amazing capacity for a total dedication of self. ... To know her was to see the spirit of humanity at its best—a privilege, indeed, to be able to see the human spirit's undimmed radiance through the coarse crust of the work-a-day world. We who had this opportunity to see face to face the spirit's unvanquished splendour revealed through Sister Nivedita were thus blest

The gift that Sister Nivedita gave us was the gift of a great life. ... We have to understand and realize the power that was behind it, the intellect, the heart, the

sacrifice, and the bright insight of genius which could make such self-dedication possible.

What impresses one most in her life is that she was at once a profound thinker and capable of dynamic action. ... Where action springs from thought, even a small deed assumes bigness, and imperfections take a strange kind of beauty like the many-coloured rays of the sun filtered through an intervening layer of clouds. Such a beauty is revealed in the life and work of Sister Nivedita.

Sister Nivedita loved India and gave herself with unreserved devotion, not withholding anything for herself.

She was, indeed, a *lokamata*, a mother

to the people. We are familiar with the mother's role in the family; but the image of a mother whose love enfolded a whole people was something we had never seen before. We have had male devotion to public duty, but never before had we witnessed such magnificent sweep of womanly devotion. When she referred to 'our people', the feeling in her voice rang more true than in the voice of anyone of us.

What a beautiful tribute given by poet Tagore to Sister Nivedita!

I am very happy to join with you all in honouring this great lady, the centenary of whose school we are celebrating today. Thank you all, namaskar. □

NEW LIFE TO THE TROUBLED



9 June 1998. A devastating cyclone razed a hundred villages of Gujarat to the ground. The worst-affected areas were those along the coast. The Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, swung into action instantly. Food packets, food grains and other eatables, utensils, clothing, polythene sheets and so on were distributed to thousands of shocked families, apart from providing medical aid. The Gujarat Government joined in the relief, and a new township was planned. The Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math provided necessary guidance and help. At Chaslana, construction work began on 22 July 1998. In addition to 30 houses (see picture), a community hall-cum-temple, a cultural, educational and medical centre, a children's park and four borewells were constructed. Completed by December 1998, the township named Sri Ramakrishna Nagar was inaugurated on 12 December 1998 by the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Sri Keshubhai Patel (see inset). The project, along with the 90-house project at Nandana which is underway, as well as another 30-house project, was funded by the **Bombay Samachar** group, which had initiated a relief fund soon after the tragedy struck. Many other organizations and individuals also came to the rescue of the poor villagers by providing assistance in several ways. The villagers who suffered such a great tragedy a year ago, are a happy lot today.

Śrī Śaṁkara's Mission and Contribution to World Thought

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

The anniversary of Śaṁkara's advent is celebrated this month. Upon request, Swami Mukhyanandaji Maharaj has sent us a thought-provoking article on Śaṁkara's contribution to world thought. Author of several works like Life and Teachings of Sri Shankaracharya (Kalady: Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama) and Vedanta—The Science of Integral Reality Vis-a-Vis Modern Science (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), the writer is a reputed scholar on Vedanta. He resides at Belur Math.

Who Was Śaṁkara?

Śrī Ādi Śaṁkarācārya flourished in India between the 6th and 9th centuries BCE. He was a spiritual genius, an illumined sage, a profound philosopher with a comprehensive, rational and scientific approach to the investigation of Truth and Reality, a versatile Sanskrit scholar with a penetrating intellect and broad vision, and a poet and hymnist with deep insight. Besides these admirable endowments, he was also a man of effective action in a vast area, a great religious reformer and organizer, and a nation-integrator and stabilizer of society by the resuscitation of ethical and spiritual values. Śaṁkara lived only for 32 years, but the profound effect of his philosophical and socio-spiritual achievements is still fresh and active in this present age. Let us pay our homage to this luminous personality of universal dimensions, who even now serves as a beacon of great brilliance in the spiritual and philosophical fields to humanity at large—both in India and the world.

Śrī Śaṁkara's mission to the world was twofold:

1. Establishing the fundamental spiritual discoveries of Vedanta on a rational and scientific basis as a science of integral Reality, amenable to investigation and realization by all competent persons;
2. The socio-spiritual regeneration of the

Vedic dharma on the basis of Vedantic truths.

In both cases his vision was broad and integral, harmonizing the temporal and the eternal, the phenomenal and the noumenal, the mundane and the spiritual, and the empirical and the transcendental aspects. The first one, applicable to the whole of humanity, dealt with the eternal spiritual Reality (Brahman) as the substratum of the universe and all its entities and beings; and in the individual it was his inmost Self (*pratyak-ātman*), transcending his psycho-physical personality, and all differences of race, religion, sex, etc as well as time and space.¹ The second one was related to the rejuvenation of the Vedic dharma and society in India.

God and the Universe

As against the hypothetical Personal God and His creation of this world, accepted by most religions on the basis of their scrip-

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1. *Jāti-nīti-kula-gotra dūraṅam
nāma-rūpa-guṇa-doṣa varjitam;
Deśa-kāla-viśayātivartī yat
brahma tattvam-asī bhāvayātmani.*

That which is beyond caste and creed, family and lineage; devoid of name and form, merit and demerit; transcending space, time, and sense-objects—that Brahman art thou. Meditate on this in thy mind. —*Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, 254. (Swami Madhavanandaji's translation).

tures, in India from the early Vedic times, more than 5000 years ago, there has been a questioning spirit and a philosophical quest as to the origin and nature of the universe and its source.² If it is a Personal God who creates the universe, what is His (Her) nature, and what is the proof of His existence? We do not really know if He exists, where He is, and why He creates. The universe, on the other hand, is present before us and we live and function in it as a part of it, and we are aware of our own existence. But a Creator-God or His activity we do not see, nor are we aware of Him. There are also highly disturbing anomalies in creation which raise many questions. So several of the eminent schools of thought in India, such as the Jaina, Bauddha, Mīmāṁsaka, Sāṁkhya—let alone the materialist Lokāyatika—did not accept a Personal Creator-God, who necessarily has to be limited, being a Person apart from other entities and beings.

Thus God we can do away with, but the universe is an empirical reality in which we live and function, and it cannot be brushed aside; nor can we ignore our own existence as the perceivers and experiencers in and of the universe. In fact, it is the universe before us which gives rise in our minds to the question as to its origin and source.

However, there is also the patent fact that what we call the universe is not a definite entity but is ever changeful. We too, as psycho-physical entities, are ever changeful, and so also are our experiences and ideas as to ourselves and the universe—from birth till death.

The Fundamental Question

Is there then any absolute, transpersonal, abiding, infinite Reality as a substratum behind both the perceiver and the perceived, the individual and the universe, which is the common source of—and affords unity to—this dual passing phenomena? If it is there, can it be experienced or realized by us with certainty? And if it can be realized,

what is its nature, and is there any method by which it can be accomplished?

These are moot points which have not been tackled by the philosophers in the world in a rational scientific spirit except in India. What is needed is not a hypothetical theological assertion, or even some type of individual mystic experiences, but such a Reality being their basis, must be universally experienceable by all competent persons *here and now*, and rationally substantiated with a scientific approach.

In India, deliberate and consistent attempts were made for a long time by Vedic ṛṣis (the spiritual scientists) in different branches of life, at several places in a wide area and in a coordinated manner to discover and realize such an absolute Reality. And the search culminated in the Upanishads, the last portion of the Vedas, and hence known as Vedānta, both from the textual and the knowledge points of view. We find here the records of the quest of the sages and their statements. They succeeded in discovering the ultimate source of all cosmic Existence (*sat*), material as well as spiritual, which they designated as Brahman—the transpersonal, infinite spiritual Principle.

In this manifested universe of a wonderful structure beyond imagination, we find, besides matter, life and consciousness; and Brahman being their source too, It is also of the nature of supreme Knowledge and universal Consciousness; and since the manifested cosmic universe is infinite, its source too is infinite. As such Brahman is of the nature of Infinite-Existence-Knowledge-Consciousness.³ Moreover, such a Reality is Perfect without any deficiencies or wants. Hence It is also of the nature of supreme Peace and Bliss. Therefore, Brahman is often characterized as Infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*ananta sat-cit-ānanda*).

The sages also delineated the methods

2. Cf. *Nāṣadiya Sūkta* in the *Rg Veda*, 10.129.

3. *Satyam jñānam anantam brahma. —Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.

by which that ultimate Reality can be discovered and apprehended within oneself intimately, since it is also the source and basis of our psycho-physical personality, which is a part and parcel of the universe. They pointed out that Brahman is our essential nature (*tat tvam asi*), and designated this Reality within oneself as Atman (Self).⁴ They also declared its identity with Brahman in a great equation: Atman = Brahman (*ayam ātmā brahma*). This is because the same infinite Reality is there behind the universe and all its beings. Atman is the abiding Reality within us which comprehends all the passing changes and gives them a functional unity.

How to Know Brahman

Chiefly, the method of realization is: (a) to direct the mind inward in meditation, divesting it of its extrovert tendencies, (b) to follow moral and spiritual disciplines, (c) to perform philosophical analysis of one's personality, and (d) to discriminate between the transitory and the eternal. The desires for fleeting external achievements and enjoyments make the mind extrovert and enmeshed in the maze of multiplicity, and it misses the abiding Reality within. They must be sublimated by a strong counter desire to realize the Truth within and be free. The mind must be concentrated and made still. Then the sun of spiritual Truth is reflected, as in a calm lake, in the pure and tranquil mind, in all its infinite glory. Otherwise, as in the wavy waters, the image of the spiritual sun in the disturbed and scattered mind gets broken up and distorted, and prevents its realization in its true nature. Hence, generally one identifies oneself with one's ego attached to the psycho-physical personality. This methodology is known as Yoga. It has different aspects, as described in the *Gītā*, to suit people with different aptitudes and abilities and in different stages of development. However, ultimately all are helped gradually to reach the same goal, the supreme Truth within. Since the individual is a part and parcel of the universe,

with Brahman as his innermost Self (the Atman), it is possible for him to realize his true nature by diving deep within into his personality and discover the identity of his Self with Brahman.

Śaṅkara's Approach to Truth

Śrī Śaṅkara's contribution to world thought comes in here. He established the Vedantic discoveries of the absolute Reality and its nature by the triple method of Revelation, Reason and Realization.⁵ While holding that the transcendent supersensual truths cannot be discovered by empirical methods, he emphasized that if the revelatory statements of the ṛṣis are to be universally accepted as true, they have to be substantiated by reasoning and also shown to be realizable by others. For this purpose, *firstly*, he assumed the Vedantic truths as hypotheses. He wrote brilliant commentaries on the Upanishads showing their reasonableness and relevance. *Secondly*, there was the work of Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa—the *Brahma Sūtra*—which systematized the statements of the Upanishadic seers, showing their unity and concord (*tat tu samanvayāt*, 1.1.4). The *Brahma Sūtra* propounds Vedanta in all its aspects and establishes its validity as against all the other systems, such as the Jaina, Bauddha, Sāṃkhya, the materialist Cārvāka, and so on. However, this work is aphoristic in nature, with only brief, mnemonic statements. Śrī Śaṅkara elaborated them in his profound commentary, and by powerful reasoning and appeal to experience, established the validity of the Vedanta system and its conclusions. *Thirdly*, there was the *Bhagavadgītā*, considered the very essence of the Upanishads, which inculcated the truths of the Vedanta in

5. Śaṅkara says in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*: *Śrutyā yuktyā svānubhūtyā jñātvā sārvaṭmyam ātmanah*.... (see verse 281). Śaṅkara frequently refers to this methodology in all his writings. He made (1) the Upanishads (revelation) (2) the *Brahma Sūtra* (reason) and (3) the *Gītā* (realization) as the triple broad foundation (*prasthāna-traya*) of the Vedantic system.

4. Cf. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.

a practical manner, and was widely recognized as the practical science of Yoga (*yoga śāstra*) to attain the knowledge of Brahman (*brahma-vidyā*).⁶ The *Gītā* lays down several yogic paths of realizing the Vedantic truths universally by all competent persons. So, Śrī Śaṅkara wrote an illuminating and lucid commentary on the *Gītā*, rationally substantiating its teachings which many have realized. Thus, for the first time Śaṅkara laid down a rational and scientific method of establishing transcendental philosophic truths by resorting to revelation, reasoning and realization in a coordinated manner, each reinforcing the other.

The Wonderful Symphony

Śaṅkara upheld the non-duality (*advaita*) of the absolute Reality, by showing that the universe is a phenomenal manifestation of its inherent Power (*śakti*) as heat in fire. This power is designated as *māyā śakti*. Like waves arising in the sea, it spontaneously manifests the universe within the framework of Time-Space-Causation on the substratum of Brahman. Just as the sea gives validity to its ever-changing waves which are non-different from it, it is Brahman which gives validity to the manifested phenomenal universe and its beings, non-different from it. Hence, the absolute Reality is One and non-dual (*ekam-eva-advitīyam*). Brahman as the substratum of the universe and its beings is their inner Self. So, while Brahman has the absolute noumenal Reality (*paramārtha sattā*), the ever-changing universe and its psycho-physical beings have derived phenomenal relative reality, amenable to all mundane activities (*vyāvahārika sattā*). All activities within the empirical realm, secular, scientific, or spiritual, can go on validly within the framework of the empirical Time-Space-Causation, with its own values.

Śaṅkara thus harmonized the transcendental and the empirical aspects of Reality.

He emphasized that all the manifestations in existence, material or spiritual, are only different aspects of the same integral Reality by virtue of its *māyā* power, just as vapour, water, ice, snow, frost, dew, fog, and so on are all different manifestations of the same H₂O. Each manifestation is conditionally valid as long as it endures, for all practical purposes, though its true essence is H₂O. Similarly all aspects of existence, empirical or otherwise, are conditionally valid in their own spheres of manifestation as long as they last (*sva-kāle satyavat bhāti*).

Just as we have different senses to vouch for different aspects of sense-perception, such as sound, light, odour, taste, touch, etc, similarly different types of grounds of valid knowledge, *pramāṇas*, are operative in the empirical and transcendental fields, and in each field the relevant *pramāṇas* are to be adopted to ascertain the truth of facts therein. In the empirical field, the empirical evidences are the means of knowledge, and in the supersensual field, intuition and direct experience by the inwardized pure mind is the evidence (*sākṣātkāra*). There is no contradiction between the two, just as there is no contradiction between the evidences given by the ears and the eyes in the realm of sound and light, though they belong to entirely different categories of facts. The same abiding Self is there as the experiencer behind all our empirical and supersensual experiences, coordinating them into a unity.

The Place of Īśvara

Śaṅkara also showed that Vedanta has a place for the personal aspect of the transpersonal Brahman phenomenally, though not as an independently existing Creator-God. Just as the transpersonal Atman within us manifests through a personality empirically as soul (*jīva*) from the individual point of view, from the universal point of view Brahman Itself manifests to us phenomenally as the personal *Īśvara* (the Ruler of the universe) or 'God' from within the universe. As long as we have an empirical personality, it is Brah-

6. See colophon at the end of each chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

man Itself that we approach as the Īśvara, and all religious activities are empirically valid. However, Īśvara being the infinite Brahman itself, 'He' is not an individual, and is not subject to Time-Space-Causation. He is free from all limitations of time, place, gender, and so on. But for the purposes of worship and adoration, Īśvara can be approached under any limited name and form, male or female, or as a flame of light, whichever the worshipper likes, while keeping in view the real nature of Īśvara as universal and omnipresent in all beings and entities. Īśvara takes on the limited forms filling the conceptual mould of the devotee's mind, just as water takes on the forms of different types of containers, without giving up its formless nature. The highest or supreme goal of life, however, is to realize the identity of one's inmost Self with Brahman, the ultimate Reality, which is of the nature of sat-cit-ānanda.

Socio-Spiritual Contributions of Śaṅkara

Coming to Śaṅkara's contribution in the socio-spiritual realm, he pointed out: 'The Vedic dharma is verily twofold, characterized by advancement into the world of action (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa*) and turning round into the world of Spirit (*nivṛtti-lakṣaṇa*). Both of these are necessary means and counterparts for the maintenance of the world, leading directly to the attainment of secular welfare and prosperity (*abhyudaya*) and spiritual freedom and enlightenment, the summum bonum (*nirīśreyasa*) of all beings.'⁷ He made the Spirit in man the basis of all his socio-spiritual activities.

Human beings live on two planes—the temporal and the eternal. Each individual has his psycho-physical aspect, which is subject to Time-Space-Causation. He lives in society on that plane, but his goal in life—as he grows up in age and advances in knowledge and experience in that realm—must be to realize his inherent spiritual nature which tran-

scends Time-Space-Causation and his psycho-physical phenomenal personality. This is to be done by conducting his mundane life and activities within the framework of ethics and morality (*dharma*), keeping in view the all-pervading supreme Reality which is inherent in all beings as their Self. So, while striving to attain the summum bonum or spiritual freedom and enlightenment in life by realizing one's divine spiritual nature, one must fulfill one's duties in society according to one's conditions of age, sex, aptitude, and ability in a spirit of dedication to the common supreme Reality in all. One must fulfill one's relevant duties as a student, as a householder, and as a retired person advanced in age diligently. At the same time, as newer generations grow up to take on the responsibility, he must cultivate detachment regarding mundane concerns progressively to concentrate on the spiritual Reality within, transcending his psycho-physical personality. Thus, Śrī Śaṅkara harmonized the mundane and the spiritual aspects of human life.

A Unique Personality

Śaṅkara also pointed out that as long as we are attached to our personality, Brahman appears to us as the personal Īśvara. But being spiritual and infinite, Īśvara can assume different names and forms, conceived by the aspirants. As the Vedas declare: Truth is one; sages allude to It in different ways.⁸ So, Śaṅkara taught that there need be no quarrel in the worship of Īśvara or God, conceived under different names and forms. What is required is sincerity and devotion in such worship and the recognition that it is the symbolic worship of the Infinite, the supreme Reality. There will always be differences in externalities, but there is the abiding divine Unity, informing all existence. As such, he gave his philosophical and hymnal support to different faiths and their worship of God as conceived by them, asking them only to shed

7. Cf. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Gītā*, Introduction.

8. *Ekaṁ sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti.* —*Rg Veda*, 1.164.46.

their parochial attitude. Hence Śaṅkara came to be known as the establisher of the six Vedic faiths (*ṣaṇ-mata-sthāpanācārya*) current in India.⁹ All religions of the world can be brought under this principle to avoid conflict and to establish peace.

Śrī Śaṅkara travelled intensively and extensively all over India to propagate his universal message and profound ideas. He established monasteries (*maṭhas*) in the four quar-

ters of India. He emphasized the importance of monasticism for the realization of the supreme Truth and the service of humanity. He organized Hindu monasticism with ten denominations (*daśanāmi*) to work under the guidance of these Maths in all parts of India so as to propagate his liberal teachings, the different aspects of his constructive work and his universal message, which is continuing till the present day. □

9. These faiths had Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī, Sūrya, Gaṇapati and Kumāra as their supreme Personal God.

The Buddha

Overcome by the sight of human misery during his four excursions, Siddhartha sat alone, pondering over life's realities. It was then that a mendicant approached him. 'Tell me, Sir, who are you?' asked Siddhartha. The mendicant replied: 'I am a mendicant, O best of men! In fear of birth and death, I have renounced the world for the sake of deliverance. Living wherever possible—either under a tree, or in a hut, or in mountain caves or in a lonely forest, I meditate and strive for the ultimate goal. I live on alms.' It was thus that the determination to renounce the world arose in the prince. So he went away alone, at night, and after many wanderings in search of a teacher, he met some ascetics. But harsh austerities that the prince practiced as taught by them did not produce any effect, and he understood that self-mortification was useless. He took to the middle path, and after years of struggle, attained *sambodhi* or enlightenment. For seven days, he enjoyed the bliss of illumination. The Buddha then rose to teach the world the truth he had understood—the truth that would lead one away from misery and sorrow to *nirvāṇa*.

Who is a Buddha? He who has overcome all craving (*tṛṣṇā*), who has attained enlightenment, and who knows the path to liberation from the cycle of births and deaths (*nirvāṇa*), is a Buddha. Gautama became the Buddha and preached the four noble truths (*caturārya satya*): these are the truths of misery (*duḥkha*), of the cause of misery (*duḥkha samudaya*), of the cessation of suffering (*duḥkha nirodha*), and of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering (*aṣṭāṅgika mārga*). What is the cause of misery? It is, according to the Buddha, desire (*tṛṣṇā*) that leads one to suffering and repeated births and deaths (*samsāra*). Not knowing the eightfold path is ignorance (*avidyā*) and this ignorance is at the root of causal nexus (*pratītya samutpāda*) which brings endless suffering. The eightfold path (*aṣṭāṅgika mārga*) takes us away from this nexus. What is the eightfold path? In his very first sermon, given at Varanasi to the five ascetics who were uselessly mortifying their flesh and had also taught Siddhartha to do so, the Buddha said: 'And this is the Noble Truth of the Way which leads to the stopping of sorrow. It is the noble eightfold path: right views, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.'

Reviews and Notices

THE THREE SYSTEMS OF VEDANTA—AN INTRODUCTION: By Swami Harshananda. Published by Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore 560019. 1997. Pp. vi+46. Rs.10.

The book under review covers principally the subject matter of the three schools of Vedanta: Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita.

The author has admitted that though the source of all these three systems of Vedanta is the *prasthānatraya*, yet their interpretations differ, being formulated at different times by different authors. Hence, in the treatment, the influence of the subjective element cannot be ignored. The book gives an introduction to these three systems of Vedanta so that interested scholars may go to the original works to know more and gather further constructive ideas out of such further study.

Swami Harshananda has started from the basics—the meaning of the term *darśana*; nature of man; proofs for the existence of God and other categories; intellectual speculations; etc. What Bādarāyaṇa said being of a *sūtra* character, there arises ambiguities in the meaning of the *sūtras*, which actually led to the Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita systems.

To the Advaitins, Brahman is the only Reality. As an object seen in illusion is neither existent (*sat*) nor non-existent (*asat*), it is indescribable (*anirvacanīya*). Moreover, Advaitins admit three types of reality: *vyāvahārika sattā*, *prātibhāsika sattā* and *pāramārthika sattā*. Any object in illusion is not totally false, but has a *prātibhāsika sattā*. The author has given a captivating account of the Advaita concepts: *Māyā*, creation, *mukti*, bringing out the distinction between *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti*, etc.

So far as the Viśiṣṭādvaita system is concerned, the author has given a new interpretation that this philosophy existed even before Rāmānuja. Earlier philosophers belonging to this school are Nam-mālvār, Kulaśekhara, Aṇḍāl and others. However, the credit for evolving this system from the earlier teachings goes to Rāmānuja. Hence he is called the best exponent of this system. Rāmānuja accepts three types of knowledge: perception, inference and verbal testimony (*āgama*). Rāmānuja also accepts the Sāṃkhya theory of *satkāryavāda*. Ontologically, Viśiṣṭādvaita accepts three entities: Brahman, *Jiva* (or *cit*), and *Prakṛti* (or *acit*). It prescribes

the means for liberation like *karma*, *bhakti*, *prapatti* and *ācāryābhimāna*. In this system, reason and faith have been nicely synthesized.

In the concluding part of the book the author has drawn a philosophical sketch of the Dvaita Vedanta system. Duality has been accepted because Reality lies at two levels: empirical and transcendental. The major contribution to the Dvaita philosophy comes from Madhva and others. Apart from other *pramāṇas*, the Dvaita philosophy accepts two more: *śakti* and *sādrśya*. To them, God though bodiless is said to have the power of creation, maintenance and destruction of the world. It is quite sensible to accept similarity (*sādrśya*) as a separate category as suggested by the author. If it is said that a face is similar to the moon (*caṇdrasadrśam mukham*), the similarity between the moon and the face is easily understandable separately: Though the beauty existing in a face (*upameya*) and that existing in the moon (*upamāna*) are essentially different, yet they are to be treated as belonging to the same group due to the power of generating the same type of pleasure. Hence, *sādrśya* has to be accepted as a separate category. The author has made an attempt to throw some light on the similarities and dissimilarities between the Sāṃkhya notion of *Prakṛti* and the Dvaita view of *Prakṛti*. So far as liberation of an individual is concerned, these philosophies hold that it will surely depend on the grace of God. It is an interesting point that Dvaita philosophers do not accept *vidveṣa-bhakti* as real *bhakti*. In the appendix the author has briefly given the historical background of other philosophers of different schools: Bhāskara, Nimbārka, Vallabha (whose philosophy is known as Śuddhādvaita) and Baladeva (the proponent of Acintya-bhedābheda). The philosophical achievements and contributions of these great thinkers have been given in short.

The book, though small in size, contains many ideas which are prerequisites for knowing, in a traditional way, the *śāstras* in general and Dvaita Vedanta in particular. The author has undertaken to present with due focus the three prominent systems of Vedanta. Yet, there are a few more schools as mentioned above which have just been recorded only briefly without giving details of their philosophical position.

For a general reader the book is quite essential as it gives a very elementary treatment. It may create a little problem, however, for researchers on account of the fact that in most of the cases no

citation to original references in support of the subject matter is given. Yet the book is logically sound and written in a scholarly way which may inspire even the neophytes in their research work.

Dr. Raghunath Ghosh, Darjeeling

KINDNESS, CLARITY AND INSIGHT: By The Dalai Lama. Translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110007. 1997. Pp. vii+232. Rs.150.

The book under review is a collection of lectures given by H.H. the Dalai Lama about the basic Buddhist doctrines, including how clarity of mind is essential in all walks of life, how to penetrate beyond appearances, and so on. These lectures were given by the Dalai Lama during his visit to the United States and Canada during 1979-81. The lectures are efficiently edited and translated by Jeffrey Hopkins with the assistance of Elizabeth Napper.

In the introductory lecture entitled 'Religions, Values and Human Society', the Dalai Lama emphasizes the basic principle of love and compassion for others. He gives a noble idea about individual life here. He says that one should extend his compassion towards enemies also that are accepted as best teachers in the practice of tolerance (p. 12). To him, compassion is the real essence of life, which is common to all religions. For this one need not be the follower of only Buddha or Christ or any other prophet. In all religions there are teachings about cultivating a sense of brotherhood, mutual love, etc. Such a noble motivation is the key to development in all fields of life—like economics, politics, science, law, medicine and so on. Everything depends on ourselves—virtuous and non-virtuous actions. This view of the Dalai Lama corresponds with that of Swami Vivekananda, who says that an individual who does not believe in himself but believes in God is an atheist.

The Dalai Lama has shown his broadness towards religion. To him, Buddhism cannot be said to be the best religion in the world. As different medicines are prescribed for different diseases, different religions are suitable to different people (p. 29). He gives a non-conventional meaning to the term *dharma*. Dharma here refers to 'any practice through which a person who has it in his or her continuum is held back from a specific fright' (p. 31). The general and most subtle type of consciousness has no beginning and no end, and hence, rebirth can be justified (p. 34).

The role of patience in life and its practical necessity are highlighted by the speaker in various ways, among which the necessity of the existence of an enemy is one, in the sense that this provides us the strength of patience. The Dalai Lama has brought out the importance of concentration which is channelizing the mind's powers (p. 40). I completely agree with the Dalai Lama's views that one should not go to extremes. That is, one should not be either too conservative or too radical, but adopt a middle way. This is applicable in all walks of life. Even consumption of food should be moderate, otherwise too much food and too little food will cause trouble (pp. 89-90). (Please see my book *Sura, Man and Society: Philosophy of Harmony in Indian Tradition*, where I have elucidated these very ideas.)

The discussion on '*Om mani padme hum*' is very interesting. The implication of each and every word is explained. The term *Om* consisting of A, U and M symbolizes the practitioner's impure body, mind and speech. *Mani*, that is, jewel, symbolizes the methods of enlightenment. As a jewel removes poverty, our altruistic mind is capable of providing peace. The term *padme* means lotus. Just as a lotus grows in dirt but is not touched by it, so also wisdom is capable of raising us to a higher status in life. Purity can be achieved by an indivisible unity of method and wisdom symbolised by the term *hum*. Hence the whole sentence means this: Depending upon the practice of a path which is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, we can transform the impure body, speech and mind into a pure exalted body, speech and mind of a Buddha who is within us (pp. 116-7).

The word *lāmā* is also interesting in meaning: *lā* means high, *mā* means negative; there is nothing higher. All those who have transcended their lower nature and have reached a higher stage are called lamas. The Dalai Lama has also shown that thinking about death can lead an individual to the path of emancipation.

All the lectures of the Dalai Lama are beneficial in helping us attain peace and happiness in life. Though there is no direct reference to God or Brahman, moral virtues and social values are accepted. The book has come out very well and the photograph of the Dalai Lama on the cover is beautiful. I noticed only one or two very minor typographical errors in the otherwise excellently edited work. My own perception of the Dalai Lama, whom I have met before, is that he is the embodiment of *Kindness, Clarity and Insight* as this book is titled.

Dr. Raghunath Ghosh, Darjeeling

MEDIA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGION IN SOUTH ASIA: By Lawrence A. Babb and Susan S. Wadley. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110007. 1997. Pp. viii+298. Rs.195 (pbk), Rs.295 (hbk).

The Hindus have used, from time immemorial, all modes of expression to disseminate religious ideas. All arts in India were totally informed by religious themes and motifs. In fact, religion and culture in India are so inextricably linked that one does not exist without the other. The Hindu therefore has welcomed every new communication medium as a tool for expressing and preaching religion. No cultural mode is considered sacrilegious and as Swami Vivekananda says, 'the Hindus have actually no sense of blasphemy; to speak of holy things in any way is to them in itself a sanctification' (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 7, p. 30).

The latest communication media, both visual and auditory, have brought about vast cultural changes all over the world. Indians have used these readily for the only important theme in their life, namely, religion. To the Occident, brought up in a strict Semitic tradition, this is naturally a curiosity. The book under review is the result of such a curiosity that was followed up by thorough study and research. Although the ostensible area of study is 'Religion in South Asia', the book deals almost wholly with India and Hinduism but for a minor reference by Qureshi to Qawwali in Pakistan.

The book is divided into three sections dealing with Printed Images, Audio Recordings, and Visual Media. The print medium has been used by all religions the world over, to preserve and disseminate religious ideas. The Hindus are no exception and well before the printing machine arrived, they used leaf-manuscripts for the purpose. However, the use of 'poster pictures' of deities seen ubiquitously in Indian homes, shops, restaurants or wherever one pleases, is perhaps unique to the Indian situation. No place is considered unholy and, on the other hand, the place is sanctified by the picture. Painted pictures of deities, particularly in southern India, were influenced by Raja Ravi Varma's art. Stephen Inglis introduces in this book another influential artist, Kondaiah Raju. He also gives a detailed account of how portraits, posters and photographs are worshipped.

The use of the 'comic books' to teach religion and hagiography to children is a remarkable product of the Indian genius. At a time when a whole generation of western-educated parents have lost

touch with their rich mythological lore, it was Anant Pai who through his Amar Chitra Katha series brought it back to their homes. Pritchett and Hawley, who discuss this in separate essays, are unduly harsh on Pai for what they consider his dilution of history and mythology to suit contemporary caste, religious and political considerations. The comic books can surely never replace the classics which too, however, cannot be said to contain absolute historical facts.

Audio cassettes and the visual media have brought about a sea change in the mode of dissemination of religion. Qureshi and Marcus in their respective essays discuss how 'devotional music is being influenced by film music. A concern is expressed whether these two media will displace the rich oral tradition of India. Though the movies and the television have pushed the traditional performances like 'katha' to the back-stage, one need not despair. The person-to-person interaction in the oral tradition continues to have its clientele.

Lutgendorf's analysis of Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayana*, the teleserial, is eminently enjoyable. He has understood the Indian ethos better than the urban, western-educated Indian. His masterly analysis gives fitting replies to the criticisms of the so-called intellectuals.

The one medium which has gripping influence on people and which can threaten religion and culture are the visual media. Steve Derne discusses how financial compulsions have resulted in the mixing up of religious themes with vulgar enjoyment.

The last essay by John Little shows how the video brings the religious preacher right into the living room. Little should have confined himself to the cultural mode rather than discuss one individual (Pandurang Athavale) in such detail. Many eminent preachers are using the video for propagating religion and philosophy.

The book makes highly interesting reading. It helps Indians to reflect on the benefits and pitfalls in the use of the recent communication media for propagating religious and cultural ideas. Neither the last nor the least, the Internet is also claiming its due place ('Vedanta in Cyberspace', *Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1998, p. 91)!

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

BOOK RECEIVED

ADVAITA & MODERNITY: Published by Adi Shankara Vedanta Pratishthanam, Bhubaneswar 751009. Pp. 62.

News and Reports

Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission

The 89th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, 20 December 1998, at 3.30 pm. The following is a synopsis of the Governing Body's report on the working of the Association in 1997-98.

The Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission was celebrated all over the country and also abroad. It was inaugurated by the Vice-President of India in an impressive function held at Nazrul Manch, Calcutta, on 1 May 1997. The concluding functions were organized at Belur Math in February 1998, as part of which an All-India Youth Convention with 7000 delegates and an All-India Devotees' Convention with 10,000 delegates were held.

New Developments

A new centre was started in Porbandar, Gujarat, at the Bhojeswar Bungalow premises where Swami Vivekananda had stayed for about four months in 1891-92. A nine-foot bronze statue of Swamiji was installed there. The activities of our Asansol centre (except school) have been shifted to a new campus where temporary monks' quarters and hostel buildings were inaugurated. The new dispensary building of Jaipur centre was dedicated and mobile medical units were started by Varanasi (Sevashrama) and Katihar centres. At the latter place the renovated shrine was also dedicated. A blood bank, a safe drinking water plant and a laparoscopic surgery unit were inaugurated at Itanagar centre. The middle school at Mallankaranai under the Madras Students' Home was upgraded to high school. At the Madras Mission Ashrama the new annexe to the higher secondary school (South) was declared open and foundation-stone was laid for an annexe to the monks' quarters. The following new buildings were also inaugurated at the centres mentioned: Balakendra Bhavan at Deoghar; book sales-cum-office building at New Delhi; ground floor of the students' home and kitchen-cum-dining hall at Jalpaiguri; kitchen block at Narottam Nagar; dining hall and monks' quarters at Puri (Mission); staff quarters and central input stores at Ranchi (Morabadi); library building at Quinton Memorial Hall in Shillong; book sales building at Kalady; second floor of the Institute of Languages at Hyderabad; office building at Jayrambati; and an auditorium at Mysore. A statue of Swami Vivekananda was unveiled in the Saradapitha (Belur) auditorium campus. The Mathura Road in front of our Vrindaban

centre was newly named as Swami Vivekananda Marg.

New temples of Sri Ramakrishna were dedicated at Madurai and Dinajpur (Bangladesh). Foundation-stone was laid for a new temple at Dhaka. Two sub-centres of the Vedanta Society of Southern California were started at Washington, D.C., and Ridgely Manor, New York State. (The latter place was visited thrice by Swami Vivekananda, twice in 1895 and once for ten weeks in 1899.) A city branch of the Buenos Aires centre was opened. The kindergarten school of our Singapore centre was formally inaugurated and a statue of the Holy Mother was installed there.

Highlights of the Year

The Narendrapur (West Bengal) centre was given the first prize for its solar energy programme and a special prize for its bio-gas programme by the Government of India. Seven teachers of our educational institutions received national and state level Best Teacher awards. Students of our Along school won several prizes in state and national level science seminars and exhibitions.

During the year the Mission undertook extensive relief and rehabilitation work in several parts of the country as well as in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, spending about Rs. 1.38 crores and benefiting nearly 6 lakh people. There was further progress in the integrated rural development programme undertaken in the Latur district of Maharashtra which was started a couple of years ago. Three cyclone shelter house-cum-schools were built in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. Foundation-stone was laid for a bridge across Vriddha Gautami Estuary in the same district.

Welfare work by way of scholarships to poor students, pecuniary help to old, sick and destitute people, etc amounted to Rs. 1.50 crores.

Medical service was rendered to nearly 50 lakh people through 9 hospitals and 99 dispensaries including mobile units, and the expenditure incurred was Rs. 16.83 crores.

Through our educational institutions—from kindergarten to postgraduate level—1,73,505 students were taught, of whom 46,292 were girls. A sum of Rs. 48.03 crores was spent for educational work.

A number of rural and tribal development projects were undertaken with a total expenditure of Rs. 6.62 crores.

The Centenary of Sister Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta

Founded by Sister Nivedita in 1898, under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda and with the blessings of the Holy Mother, the Nivedita School became the nucleus of women's spiritual and educational movement in Bengal. Sister Nivedita was assisted by Sister Christine and Sudhira Bose, who continued her work till 1920. In 1918 Nivedita's school was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission, which managed it till 1963 when it was handed over to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission. From its humble beginning at the residence of Sister Nivedita at 16 Bosepara Lane, in 1922 it was shifted to a new building at 5 Nivedita Lane. It has become one of the standard institutions for girls. Moreover, it has retained Nivedita's spiritual and nationalistic, as well as practical and modern educational ideals. The centenary of this unique school was celebrated on several occasions throughout the year. This is an account of the recent events:

Teachers' Day was celebrated at the Girish Manch on 5 September. Patriotic songs were sung by the teachers of the school, depicting the heroic role played by the women of India.

There was a week-long exhibition on the history of Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, and Sister Nivedita's contribution to the revival of Indian art at the Academy of Fine Arts on 28 October. About 70 artists who contributed to the exhibition were honoured by Pravrajika Shraddhaprana, General Secretary, Sarada Math, at a meeting at Rabindra Sadan on the opening day. The meeting was presided over by Sri Chittatosh Mukhopadhyaya, Chairman, West Bengal Human Rights Commission. Prof. Satkari Mukhopadhyaya, Co-ordinator, Kalakosa Division, Indira Gandhi National Council of Arts, New Delhi, was the chief guest. Sri Bikash Bhattacharya, one of the famous artists who contributed paintings to the exhibition, spoke about what Sister Nivedita means to contemporary Indian artists. He said that Nivedita came to awaken self-confidence in Indians without which they could not do anything creative. Without an awareness of their own national traditions, Indians could not contribute much to the other nations. Smt. Rakhi Sarkar, Director, CIMA, presented a scholarly documentation of the history of Indian art, the impact of the West on it, and Sister Nivedita's leading role in the movement for national art. Nivedita's vision of art was clear, Smt. Sarkar said, but what saddened her was the ignorance of the artists of the time about the main theme of Indian philosophy, namely, unity. Smt. Sarkar also pointed out that Sister Nivedita was one of the principle inspirations behind such a great artist as Abanindranath Tagore, who is frequently referred to as the father of mod-

ern Indian art. The programme ended with a performance by the Indian Epic Culture Centre.

The exhibition, opened that afternoon by Most Revered Pravrajika Mokshapranaji, President, Sarada Math, was divided into three sections. The first was a pictorial history of the Ramakrishna Sarada Movement. In addition to original documents and photographs, this section also included many paintings done by well-known artists and alumni of the Nivedita School. The second section contained pictures by great artists in original and in print which were inspired and reviewed by Sister Nivedita herself. Artists represented were Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Asit Haldar and others. The last section, 'Pushpanjali', consisted of paintings and sculptures by famous artists of India and abroad. It was a homage to Sister Nivedita.

Students' Day was observed at the Science City Hall on 6 November. Before large oil paintings of Sri Sarada Devi and Sister Nivedita which adorned the stage, the President of India, Dr. K.R. Narayanan, inaugurated the function.

In her welcome address Pravrajika Atmaprana, a former principal of the Nivedita Girls' School, delineated the ideas and plans of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita regarding the education of women in India. She said: 'It is a well established fact today that ... women's education is of paramount importance. The presence of respected Rashtrapati is very significant today because it is necessary that the First Citizen of the country should lead the crusade for the development of women so as to enable them to exercise their right of shaping the emerging society.'

The President of India reminded the audience that Swami Vivekananda had pointed out that one of the chief causes of India's downfall was the subjection of its women. He marvelled that the Nivedita School had been in existence for a hundred years at a stretch. Praising its approach to the enlightenment of women in India, Dr. Narayanan said that it was based on classical studies in language and literature and the inculcation of our old cultural values combined with a modern knowledge of science and technology. He congratulated the school management not only for serving the cause of education but also for working for the general uplift of the people of the locality.

The President then released the Centenary Souvenir which contained 31 articles in English, 41 in Bengali and many illustrations.

Pravrajika Amalaprana, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, read the benediction of Most Revered Pravrajika Mokshapranaji: 'The real significance of this school is that it formed

the nucleus of a great women's movement—the Sri Sarada Movement. The Sarada Math and the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, the twin organizations totally managed by women, had their origin in this school. The Math and Mission, through their various branches in India, work for the welfare of humanity, especially women and children. We pray to the Almighty that we, the people of this country, wherever we may be, in whichever position we may be placed, may strive sincerely and selflessly for the common good, for the welfare of our country and of our people. Let us try to get inspired by Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India. Let us enshrine in our hearts the ideal of selfless love and service and spiritual depth of Sri Sarada Devi along with the dauntless spirit, unflinching faith and untiring energy of Sister Nivedita.'

Pravrajika Shraddhaprana traced the origin of the Sarada Math to the initiation of Margaret Noble into the vow of brahmacharya and the inauguration of her school by none other than Sri Sarada Devi herself. Why should Swami Vivekananda invite an extraordinary person like Margaret Noble, who was already an educationist of repute before she met him, to start a mere primary school in India? Swamiji wanted Nivedita to train Indian women in such a way that they would retain their religious and cultural heritage. In fact, the few women who gathered around Nivedita called their rented house 'Matrimandir', and their life pattern resembled that of a monastic home. Nivedita's understanding of her master made it difficult for her to keep her role limited within the four walls of a school. She expanded Swamiji's message of man-making to nation-building. In a sense, Nivedita's school may be called the first national school in India where, at the daily prayer, students sang the national song *Vande Mataram* even when it was banned by the British. And it was Nivedita, again, who played an important role in inspiring artists to revive Indian art, giving them a strong impetus towards independence.

In the course of his speech Sri A.R. Kidwai, Governor of West Bengal, happily noted that women are now able to play a greater role in India than they ever did before. And this they are doing with great distinction. All this augers well because in our society women are the creators of a good social centre, and they are the ones who care for the well-being and welfare of humanity. These ideals are very important to our society, the Governor said. He admired the school for the leadership it has shown and the guidance it has given in the field of women's education.

The day's function was liberally interspersed with recitations and dramatic performances by children. It was attended by two thousand people.

November 13 was Centenary Day. On the 100th anniversary of the school's inauguration there were special programmes at the premises. Shehnai music, hymns, bhajans, puja and chanting greeted the day. Bracketed between two large decorated arches the Nivedita Lane was illuminated with chandeliers and coloured lights. In front of 16 Bosepara Lane, which was Sister Nivedita's residence and the original school building, stood a marble plaque, which read: 'The historic building where Sister Nivedita Girls' School was first housed. Here Sister Nivedita started her Girls' School ... on the auspicious Kali Puja day, 13 November 1898. Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi herself conducted the foundation ceremony which was attended by Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda'

The centenary celebration was formally inaugurated by Smt. Indubala Ghosh, a 93-year-old lady and the oldest living student of the school. Residents of Baghbazar lined the streets to watch a joyful procession of nuns, teachers and students led by Pravrajika Chidanandaprana. At 9 am Most Revered President Mataji and other senior nuns arrived at the school and made floral offerings to the Holy Mother. Later, a special *havan* was performed and prasad was distributed to more than 10,000 people.

In the afternoon, a week-long handicrafts exhibition organized by Pravrajika Divyaprana was opened by Most Revered President Mataji, while Pravrajika Shuddhaprana opened another exhibit of dolls and handicrafts organized by Sarada Mandir students.

A public meeting was held in the evening under the auspices of the Sutanuti Parishad of Baghbazar. Swami Lokeswarananda, Swami Purnatmananda, Sri A.R. Kidwai, Prof. Hosainur Rahman, Justice Shyamal Sen and Sri Kamal Basu of the Sutanuti Parishad addressed the large gathering.

On 15 November there was a nuns' conference in the prayer hall of the Nivedita Girls' School. The sannyasinis chanted from the Vedas and sang hymns. Most Revered President Mataji and Pravrajika Shraddhaprana, the General Secretary, addressed the nuns. There were readings from the teachings of Swami Brahmananda and Swami Shivananda. The conference was attended by 112 nuns from India and abroad.

The concluding function of the celebration was held on 16 November at the Netaji Indoor Stadium. The mammoth public meeting was graced by Sri-mat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and Most Revered President Mataji. In her welcome address Pravrajika Swarupaprana,

Secretary, Sister Nivedita Girls' School, acknowledged the great contribution of the Ramakrishna Mission to the school in nourishing it for many years before handing it over to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission.

In his speech Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj gave a brief outline of the life of Sister Nivedita and her contribution to Indian art, education and politics. Quoting from Rabindranath Tagore, Maharaj said, 'I have not seen in anyone else such amazing capacity for a total dedication of self. Nothing could inhibit this pouring out of herself, neither bodily limitations, nor the European habits acquired since infancy, nor the affection of family and friends, nor the proud disdain of her compatriots, nor indeed the indifference, ingratitude and selfishness of those in whose service she gave herself. To know her was to see the human spirit's undimmed radiance through the coarse crust of the workaday world. We who had this opportunity to see, face to face, the spirit's unvanquished splendour revealed through Nivedita were blest.' Concluding his speech, Revered Maharaj called Nivedita a *lokamata*, a mother of the people—something which Indians had never seen before.

Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu congratulated the school for its yeoman service in the area of women's education in India. Speaking about Nivedita's dedication to the cause that Swami Vivekananda had set for her, Prof. Basu said that apart from teaching, Nivedita was associated with every type of activity for the good of India. In complete obedience to Swamiji's instructions, she had renounced every ulterior motive so that she could place herself fully at India's service. 'She was ordained to rouse Indians,' Prof. Basu said, 'she came to them as Sarasvati, the Great White Goddess of Learning.'

Pravrajika Ajayaprana, President, Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society, Sydney, spoke next. She dealt with Sister Nivedita's meeting with the Holy Mother and dilated upon its significance

for the modern generation, especially women. Sri Sarada Devi was not a human being having spiritual experiences but a spiritual being having human experience. She is Primal Energy concentrate, and our task is to tap that energy, become rejuvenated and be ready to plunge into life's whirlpool with renewed vigour. Sister Nivedita did just that. Through her meeting with the Holy Mother and subsequent life of action, Nivedita has shown us how we should launch the scheme [of nation-building] and work it out.

Pravrajika Nirbhayaprana, President, Sarada Math, Chennai, said: 'People say compassion for human beings is the duty of everyone. But Sri Ramakrishna gave us the idea of the worship of God in man, and this idea has spread through Swami Vivekananda. It was this idea that attracted Nivedita to Swamiji.'

The chief guest, Dr. Uma Dasgupta, observed that Nivedita's work in the sphere of education began long before Tagore's and Gandhiji's. Not wanting to wait for funds or space—things which we consider essential for starting an institution—Sister Nivedita started her school at her own residence, with her own living allowance. There was little advertisement for her enterprise, but what she started grew into a silent movement in Indian education. Quoting Nivedita's words, Dr. Dasgupta said that what Nivedita worked for was 'to bring back confidence to Indian society by educating it about our country's past, which British rule had diffused and English education had thrown into confusion.' Dr. Dasgupta added that Nivedita spearheaded the Indian national awakening no less than any nationalist leader of the time.

At the end of the evening's programme the audience of more than 10,000 was treated to a sarod recital by Ustad Amjad Ali Khan.

The centenary celebrations came to an end on 22 November with Narayana Seva at the Sister Nivedita Girls's School where food and clothing were distributed to 1600 people of the locality.

Dear Reader,
Please accept our heartiest
Baishakhi greetings!

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda

Two letters written by Swami Vivekananda to Maharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri were recently found among old papers in the record room of the Khetri Sub-divisional Officer's office (Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan). We are publishing the text of the letters virtually unedited. A copy of these letters has been received through the courtesy of Ramakrishna Math (HQs)—Editor.

I

Madras
the 15th February [1893]

Your Highness,

Two things I am telling your Highness. One — a very wonderful phenomenon I have seen in a village called Kumbhakonam, and another about myself.

In the said village lives a man of the Chetty caste, generally passing for an astrologer. I, with two other young men, went to see him. He was said to tell about anything a man thinks of. So, I wanted to put him to the test. Two months ago, I dreamt that my mother was dead and I was very anxious to know about her. My second was whether what my Guru had told me was right. The third was a test-question — a part of the Buddhistic mantra¹, in Tibetan tongue. These questions I determined upon, two days before going to this Govinda Chetty. Another young man had one of his sisters-in-law given poison to, by some unknown hand, from which she recovered. But he wanted to know the author of that devilry.

When we first saw him, the fellow was almost ferocious. He said that some Europeans came to see [him] with the Dewan of Mysore and that since then through their 'Dristee Dosham'² he had got fever and that he could not give us a séance then and only if we paid him 10 Rs., he would consent to tell us our 'prasnas'³. The young men with me of course were ready to pay down his fees. But he goes to his private room and immediately comes back and says to me that if I gave him some ashes to cure him of his fever he would consent to give us a séance. Of course I told him that I do not boast of any power of curing diseases but he said, 'That does not matter, only I want [the ash]'. So, I consented and he took us to the private room and, taking a sheet of paper, wrote something upon it and gave it over to one of us and made me sign it and keep it into the pocket of one of my companions. Then he told me point blank, 'Why you, a Sannyasi, are thinking upon your mother?' I answered that even the great Shankaracharya would take care of his mother; and he said 'She is all right and I have written her name in that paper in the possession of your friend' and then went on saying, 'Your Guru is dead. Whatever he has told you, you must believe, for he was a very very great man,' and went on giving me a description of my Guru which was most wonderful and then he said 'What more you want to know about your Guru?' I told him 'If you can give me his name I would be satisfied', and he said, 'Which name? A Sannyasi gets different sorts of names'. I answered, 'The name by which he was known to the public', and says, 'The wonderful name, I have already written that. And you wanted to know about a *mantra* in Tibetan, that is also written in that paper.' And, he then told me to think of anything in any language and tell him, I told him 'Om Namō Bhagavate Vāsudevāya', and he said. 'That is also already written in the

1. *Mantra* = sacred word/words.

2. *Drishti Dosham* = Inauspicious look.

3. *Prasna* = questions.

paper in possession of your friend. Now take it out and see'. And Lo! Wonder! They were all there as he said and even my mother's name was there!! It began thus—your mother of such and such name is all right. She is very holy and good, but she is feeling your separation like death and within two years she shall die; so, if you want to see her, it must be within two years.

Next it was written — your Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa is dead but he lives in *Sukshma*, i.e. ethereal body, and is watching over you, etc. and then it was written "Lamala capsechua", in Tibetan, and then at last was written 'In confirmation to what I have written, I give you also this *mantra* which you would give me after one hour after my writing; 'Om Namō Bhagavate etc.'; and so he was equally successful with my friends. Then I saw people coming from distant villages and as soon as he sees them he says—'Your name is such and such and you come from such and such village for this purpose'. By the time he was reading me, he toned down very much and said — 'I won't take money from you. On the other hand, you must take some "seva" from me'. And I took some milk at his house and he brought over his whole family to bow down to me and I touched some 'vibhutee'¹ brought by him and then I asked him the source of his wonderful powers. First he would not say, but after a while he came to me [and] said—'Maharaj, it is "siddhi of mantras"² through the "sahāya"³ of "Devi". Verily, 'there are more things on heaven and earth Horatio than your philosophy ever dreamt of.'—Shakespeare.

The second is regarding me. Here is a zamindar of Ramnath, now staying in Madras. He is going to send me over to Europe and, as you are already aware of, I have a great mind to see those places. So I have determined to take this opportunity of making a tour in Europe and America. But I can't do anything without asking your Highness, 'the only friend on Earth' I have.

So kindly give your opinion about it. I only want to make a short tour in those places. One thing I am certain of, that I am [an] instrument in the hands [of] a holy and superior power. Myself, I have no peace, am burning literally day and night, but somehow or other, wherever I go hundreds and, in some [places] as in Madras, thousands would come to me day and night and would be cured of their skepticism and unbelief but I —! I am always unhappy!! Thy will be done!! Therefore, I don't know what this power requires of me, to be done in Europe. I cannot but obey. 'Thy will be done'!! There is no escape.

I congratulate your Highness on the birth of a son and heir. May the infant prince be quiet like his most noble father and may the Lord shower his blessings always on him and his parents.

So I am going over in two or three weeks to Europe. I can't say anything as to the future of the body. Only I pray to your Highness if it be proper to take some care of my mother that she does not starve.

I would be highly obliged to get a reply soon, and pray your Highness to keep the latter part of this letter, i.e., my going over to England etc., confidential.

May you be blessed all your life, you and yours, is the prayer that is day and night offered up by,

Saccitananda
C/o. M. Bhattacharya Esq.
Assistant Accountant General
Mt. St. Thome, Madras

1. *vibhutee* = holy ash

2. *siddhi of mantras* = powers caused by sacred words.

3. *sahāya* = help

II

Bombay
the 22nd May [18]93

Your Highness,

Leaving Khetri there happened nothing particular to relate except that I had every comfort on the way, broke journey at Kharari and then [went] to Nariad [Nadiad]. Haridas Bhai was as usual very kind to me and we had many and many a talk about your Highness, so much so that he was really very anxious to see you and intends paying his respects to your Highness in his coming winter tour to the north. And I dare say your Highness would also be very much pleased to see this old man of great experience who was for twenty-five years the mentor of Kathiawad. Withal he is the only remnant of the old school of very conservative politicians. He is a man who is thoroughly able to organize and put to perfect order an existing machinery; but he would be the last man to move a step further.

At Bombay I went to see my friend Ramdas, Barrister-at-Law. He is rather a sentimental gentleman and was so much impressed with your Highness' character that he told me that had it not been midsummer he would rather fly to see such a prince.

His father intends going to Chicago on the 31st; if so, we would go together for company. Today I go to buy some steel trunks etc., and am only waiting for the Madras money to come in. Although I wired to them from Jeypore, they were rather suspicious and waited for my further communications and I have again wired them and written too.

On our way we had the company of Mr. Ramnath, the charan headmaster of the Jeypore noble's school. He and I had a bout on my first coming out of Khetri years ago, about vegetarianism. He had in the meantime got hold of some American writers and pounced upon me with his arguments from them. His author, he said, has proved to his satisfaction that the human digestive organs including the teeth are exactly like those of the cow. Therefore, man is designed by nature to be a vegetarian animal. He is a very good and nice gentleman and I did not want to disturb his confidence in the American hobbyist but one thing was on the tip of my tongue—If our digestive apparatus is exactly like that of a cow—we ought and must be able to eat and digest grass. In that case poor Indians are fools to die of starvation in famine times while their natural food, grass, is so abundant, and your Highness' servants are fools to serve you while they have only to get up the nearest hillock and get a bellyful of grass instead of undergoing all the trouble of serving others!!! Grand American discovery indeed!!! Only I hope the holy dungs of such human cows may become of great use to the wonderful American author and his Indian disciple. Amen. So much for the cow-human theory.

Do not find anything more to advertize to your Highness, so, beg leave to stop here.

May the giver of all good bestow his choicest blessings on you and yours, I remain,

Yours in the Lord,

Vivekananda